

# VITAL Herefordshire LEADER programme

## Information Sheet – updated October 2008

### What is it?

LEADER is a way of delivering rural development through a local community led approach and is a delivery mechanism funded throughout Europe. In this country it forms part of the government's Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE), administered in this region by Advantage West Midlands, the local Regional Development Agency (AWM). AWM has provisionally approved a bid by a local partnership for the VITAL Herefordshire programme (the Local Action Group) to deliver LEADER in Herefordshire effective from 2009 until 2013.

The West Midlands priorities for LEADER are focused on social and community issues, and LEADER in Herefordshire has the following **strategic objectives** to:

- **Enable local communities to develop and implement actions to improve the quality of life of those living and working in rural Herefordshire.**
- **Enable local communities to develop and access the services they need in their area.**
- **Support and improve local democratic structures to meet the needs of local communities**
- **Training local people to meet identified skill gaps and encourage enterprise**
- **Enhance and maintain the distinctiveness of the countryside, including cultural, historic and natural environment**

### How will it work?

LEADER is able to provide funding support to projects which meet the objectives of the programme, and operate in the eligible area, which comprises all of Herefordshire except Hereford City. Around £250,000 per year is likely to be available in Herefordshire. Delivery of LEADER will be led by the VITAL Herefordshire Local Action Group (LAG) composed of appropriate representation from the public, private and voluntary sectors, which is hosted by Herefordshire Council who will be the Accountable Body from whom formal grant offers will be made.

Projects will be appraised by an independent Appraisal Panel and given formal approval by the Local Action Group. A detailed Strategy is currently being developed as part of the full bid, and on completion of this Advantage West Midlands will confirm the funding, which is likely to be in early 2009. Detailed guidance for applicants will then be drawn up.

### What are the issues?

A number of key social and community issues have been identified in Herefordshire which LEADER will aim to assist in addressing:

- Poor and deteriorating access to services for rural residents, including transport infrastructure and cost, and the depletion of village based services;
- Social exclusion caused by poverty and rural isolation for a significant minority of the population
- Uncertainty over the sustainability of the economy of the area and a lack of relevant local training and learning opportunities
- Low levels of economic wealth and pay
- Poor levels of local engagement and empowerment
- Lack of support for enterprising solutions to local issues



- Lack of resources to support community development across Herefordshire
- Barriers to visiting the countryside through access issues and lack of awareness of rural issues
- A need to raise awareness and understanding in communities about the impact of climate change

It should be noted that certain groups have been identified as a priority for LEADER in the 2007-13 period. These are women, the young and micro-businesses.

**Projects should aim to meet at least one of these European measures:**

- *Basic services for the economy and rural population – this measure aims to improve or maintain the living conditions and welfare of those living in rural areas and to increase the attractiveness of such areas through the provision of more and better basic services for the economy and the rural population.*
- *Village Renewal and Development – this measure aims to support integrated village initiatives which promote cross-community development and regeneration.*
- *Conservation and upgrading of the rural heritage – this measure aims to conserve and enhance the rural heritage, including the traditional farmed landscape, as the basis for sustainable economic growth in rural areas.*
- *Training and information for economic participants – this measure aims to enhance human potential required for the enhancement of the rural economy. It will support the achievement of; diversification into non-agricultural activities, developing micro-enterprises, encouraging tourism, etc, by developing the skills of the economically active in the rural area.*

In summary, LEADER in Herefordshire aims to actively encourage thriving rural communities by improving access to local services, encouraging community activity particularly through community planning, enhancing the environment in its widest sense of both natural and cultural heritage, and developing skills and capacity to encourage communities to shape their own future. It is a method for harnessing local knowledge to enable a “bottom up”, community led approach to delivery to address locally identified issues, which fit within European funding eligibility criteria.

### **Eligible Area?**

The VITAL Herefordshire LEADER area covers the County of Herefordshire, **excluding** Hereford City (wards of Aylestone, Belmont, Central, St Martins and Hinton, St Nicholas, Three Elms and Tupsley). This includes all of the market towns and sparsely populated rural areas of Herefordshire,

### **Is Match Funding required?**

Although it is possible for the LAG to fully support projects (except training, where 30% match funding will be required), it is expected that successful proposals will contain a level of public, voluntary and private match funding; this may be in cash or in-kind.

### **How can I find out more?**

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