

SRDP LEADER

A Brief Guide for Community Woodland Groups

Introduction

LEADER is one of the eight funding streams (“delivery mechanisms”) that make up the Scotland Rural Development Programme (SRDP): a £1.6 billion programme of economic, environmental and social measures designed to develop rural Scotland over the next six years.

Nationwide, LEADER funding amounts to about 2.4% of the total SRDP budget (c £38.5m). A further £19.2m of Convergence Funds is available to LEADER areas in the Highlands & Islands.

LEADER is aimed at promoting economic and community development within rural areas. Support will be aimed primarily at small-scale, community driven projects that are pilot and innovative in nature. The aim of LEADER is to increase the capacity of local rural community and business networks to build knowledge and skills, and encourage innovation and co-operation in order to tackle local development objectives.

LEADER is an acronym for Liaison Entre Action De Development De L’Economie Rurale (or Links Between Actions for the Development of the Rural Economy). There have been 3 previous programmes (LEADER 1, 2 and LEADER +), with smaller budgets covering restricted areas.

Funding is awarded by 20 Local Action Groups (LAGs) who between them cover almost all of rural Scotland, including towns up to a population of 10,000. These LAGs are made up of representatives from the local council, public agencies, business people, voluntary action groups & community groups, all LAGs must be comprised of at least 50% non-public sector representatives.

What projects can be funded? - Themes and Target groups

Unlike most of the SRDP delivery mechanisms, LEADER doesn’t have a specific lists of projects or operations to spend money on. Instead, each LEADER group has drawn up Area-based Local Development Strategies; these outline the main themes, target groups and desired outcomes of the local LEADER programme — the onus is generally on applicants to make the case for how their project meets the development outcomes of the local plan.

To guide this process, the Scottish Government issued 5 broad themes for LEADER – as part of its submission, each LEADER group had to pick one or two of these as the focus of their programme.

- 1 Revitalising Communities
- 2 Rural Community Capacity
- 3 New Markets and Products
- 4 Progressive Rural Economy
- 5 Conservation of the Rural Environment

As it transpired, most groups picked the same two themes. However, each LEADER group has interpreted these rather broad (and over-lapping) themes to meet specific, local needs, for example, the Highland LEADER programme has 8 key themes:

- Local Development Strategies
- Culture and Heritage

- Training and Learning Opportunities
- Access to Activities, Facilities and Services
- Land, Environment and Access to the Countryside
- Renewables
- Tourism
- Social Enterprise and Micro-Businesses

Likewise, LEADER groups were invited to identify target groups. Two groups: women and young people, were mandated by the Scottish Government, and apply to all areas. In addition, individual LEADER groups have variously targeted demographic fractions (e.g. the elderly, migrant workers and their families), applicant types (micro-businesses, social enterprises), or geographic sub-areas.

Themes and Target groups are detailed in the Local area Development Plans, which are available from the various LEADER group websites, along with further guidance.

Eligibility & Funding Rules

The bullet points below are drawn from the basic LEADER funding rules, as documented in the full Technical Guidance for LAGs, which is downloadable from

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Rural/SRDP/LEADER/GuidanceRev1>

However please note that these may be supplemented by additional guidelines, rates & rules imposed by individual LAGs.

- Constituted community groups, social enterprises, micro or small businesses, voluntary organisations or public sector bodies with a project to benefit rural communities can apply.
- Individuals who have public support for their project, submitting proposals which implement the local strategy can also apply in some cases. These projects will be community driven and will benefit a wide section of the community rather than an individual.
- Awards of LEADER funds will not normally exceed 50% of eligible costs, apart from trans-regional and trans-national projects where 70% of eligible costs can be funded.
- As Convergence Funds require higher levels of public match funding, LEADER groups in the Highlands and Islands may have to set a lower maximum LEADER grant rate.
- Match funding, which must be committed before the project starts, can come from all public and private sources EXCEPT other EU funds.
- The total amount of all public grant support may not normally exceed 95% of the LEADER project's eligible costs since the applicant must contribute at least 5% of the eligible cost.
- Match funding in the form of in-kind contributions (e.g. supply of land, property, long term equipment, raw materials and unpaid work provided by volunteers) is acceptable, but must be supported by an audit trail – e.g. timesheets for voluntary labour. The LEADER contribution cannot be greater than the value of the actual cash costs incurred.
- Claims must be based on actual costs, net of recoverable VAT, and verified by receipted invoices, bank statements etc.
- There is a minimum eligible project cost of £1000.

Overlap with other SRDP delivery mechanisms

There are a number of potential overlaps with other SRDP funding streams, for Community woodlands the most obvious are with Rural Development Contracts (RDC) and the Forestry Challenge Funds, and given the regional variations in both RDC and LEADER it is impossible to make a precise delineation between them.

One golden rule is that RDC and LEADER grants cannot be used to fund the same project – you will need to decide which programme best fits your project, and should seek guidance from CWA staff, and from RDC Case Officers and the LEADER Coordinator before submitting an application.

However applicants for LEADER funding can apply to other parts of the SRDP **as long as these applications are all for different operations**: e.g. Land Managers Options could pay for creating access routes for harvesting, Rural Priorities can contribute towards forest management operations such as restocking or conversion to continuous cover, you could apply to the Forestry for People Challenge Fund for help to establish a volunteer group, and a LEADER grant might contribute towards car parking and interpretation costs.

CWA staff can help you identify appropriate sources of funding for all of your projects if you get in touch. Staff contacts: <http://www.communitywoods.org/index.php/staff/>

Application Process

All LEADER groups were issued a standard LEADER application form by the Scottish Government, however, some groups have “customised” this slightly. In addition, some LAGs require you to complete an “initial enquiry form”, outlining the basics of your project.

Details of the application process and relevant forms should be checked on the appropriate LAG website. See table on page 4 for LAG weblinks.

Each LAG will have its own timetable and arrangements for receiving and assessing applications and making awards. Some LAGs (e.g. Argyll & the Islands, Dumfries & Galloway) are already open for business and have made awards, others (e.g. Highland, Ayrshire) will open before the end of 2008, and all should be receiving applications by spring 2009.

Action 2: Transregional & Transnational Projects

Whilst the majority of funding is to be spent on projects within the individual LAG areas, as described above, there is also scope and encouragement for “Action 2” projects, which involve joint activities with other LAGs in Scotland, the UK, and Europe and beyond.

Transnational projects are not just travelling abroad to look at other projects or share information but must involve similar activity in all the LAG areas concerned. Transnational projects are not limited to working with EU partner nations or LEADER groups, but require confirmation from the Scottish Government that the country or groups are adopting a LEADER-type approach. Funding can only apply to that part of the project taking place in the EU.

As the Commission recognises the UK as the Member State, and Scotland as a region within it, projects within Scotland are classed as inter-regional and attract a funding rate of 50%. Projects within the rest of the UK are trans-regional, and those in other European countries are trans-national.

LEADER Local Action Groups

This table contains details of all 20 LEADER Local Action Groups, web address where known / established, the LEADER and Convergence funding awards and email addresses for the main contacts. These 20 groups cover >95% of Rural Scotland.

LAG, weblink where known	Themes	LEADER (£m)	Conv (£m)	Main contacts
Argyll & The Islands	1 & 4	2.80	5.12	Sheila.Mclean@argyll-bute.gov.uk Lorna.Elliot@argyll-bute.gov.uk
Ayrshire	1 & 2	3.38		sarah.baird@south-ayrshire.gov.uk
Cairngorms	1 & 4	1.00	1.17	patriciamethven@cairngorms.co.uk
Dumfries & Galloway	1	2.85		roslyn.mcnay@dumgal.gov.uk
East Renfrewshire	1 & 3	0.34		Suzanne.tyrrell@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk
Fife	2	1.33		barbara.solway@fife.gov.uk
Forth Valley & Lomond	1 & 5	2.77		ketteridgea@stirling.gov.uk (Anne-Michelle Ketteridge)
Highland	1 & 4	6.76	7.50	nicole.wallace@highland.gov.uk nicola.ewing@hient.co.uk
Kelvin Valley	1 & 5	0.56		KanePaul@northlan.gov.uk (Paul Kane)
Moray	1 & 4	1.44	0.40	david.watson@moray.gov.uk
Orkney Islands	1 & 4	0.57	1.54	alister.brown@orkney.gov.uk
Outer Hebrides	1	0.95	1.98	kathlene.macdonald@cne-siar.gov.uk
Renfrewshire	1 & 5	0.47		jenny.gough@renfrewshire.gov.uk
Rural Aberdeenshire	1 & 4	3.36		vicky.thomson@aberdeenshire.gov.uk
Rural Tayside	1 & 4	2.00		Callanderrb@angus.gov.uk (Rita Callander)
Scottish Borders	1 & 4	2.42		scotbordersleader@scotborders.gov.uk (Sam Smith)
South Lanarkshire		1.47		chris@ruraldevtrust.co.uk (Chris Parkin)
Shetland Islands	1 & 4	0.65	1.49	leader@shetland.gov.uk (Sheila Keith)
Tyne Esk	1 & 4	2.34		jadamson@eastlothian.gov.uk (Jayne Adamson)
West Lothian	1 & 2	1.05		avril.wallace@westlothian.gov.uk

Contacts / More Information

Most, perhaps all, LEADER groups will be employing development staff who will have some remit to advise and assist applicants. In many cases they are listed as the main contact above.

CWA staff contacts: <http://www.communitywoods.org/index.php/staff/>

The Scottish Government LEADER Team:

Iain Matheson 0131 244 6161 iain.matheson@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

Lorraine McEwan 0131 244 4157 lorraine.mcewan@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

Address: Scottish Government Rural Directorate, 47 Robb's Loan, Edinburgh, EH14 1YT

LEADER "home page": <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Rural/SRDP/LEADER>