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PROGRAMME

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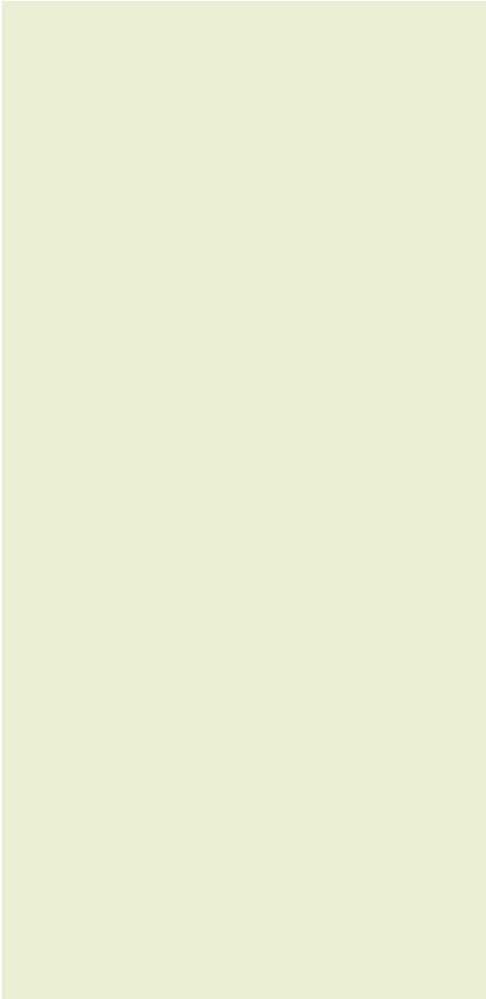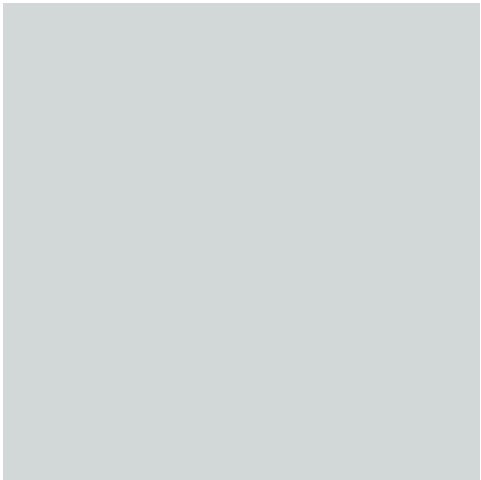
Report from Ash
Futures

March 2022

VALE of GLAMORGAN
LOCAL ACTION
G · R · O · U · P
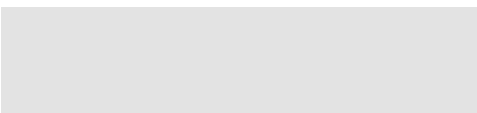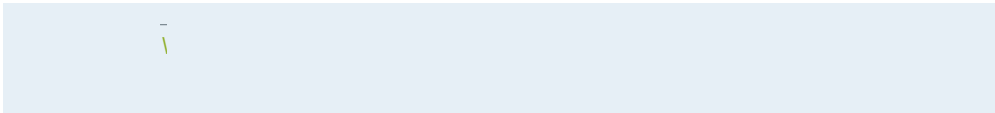
1. INTRODUCTION

LEADER and the Vale of Glamorgan Local Development Strategy

LEADER has been an approach to local development in rural areas. Now in its sixth (and final in the UK) iteration since it was first introduced into European Funding programmes in 1992, it has been based on seven core principles:

- It takes an area-based approach, set out in a local development strategy
- It develops from the bottom up in terms strategy and delivery
- It brings together local people in a public/private/community partnership to manage its delivery – the Local Action Group
- It seeks to achieve integrated and multi-sectoral activity
- It seeks to be innovative at the local level
- It also looks to co-operate with other LEADER areas
- And it seeks to develop local networks and encourage networking

The Vale of Glamorgan Local Development Strategy (LDS) set out the LEADER strategy and approach for the rural Vale for the EU structural funding period 2014–2020. It was prepared and submitted to Welsh Government (WG) for approval in 2014. Creative Rural Communities (CRC) has acted as the route through which local LEADER support has been provided to project activities in the rural Vale. It has been managed and facilitated by the Creative Rural Communities team who have delivered LEADER in the rural Vale on behalf of the Vale of Glamorgan Local Action Group (LAG). Vale of Glamorgan Council (VoG Council) has acted as the administrative and accountable body for the LEADER programme. CRC has been the Council's Rural Regeneration Initiative and it has acted as employer for the CRC team. The Council has committed significant matched funding over the current programme period. Core services have been made available to CRC at zero cost.

The Evaluation Brief

This report represents the final evaluation of the Vale of Glamorgan LEADER programme. It follows on from a mid-term evaluation that was undertaken through 2019, as well as an accompanying legacy report. Given its scope to influence the remainder of the programme, the mid-term evaluation represented the most significant aspect of the evaluation activity. This final evaluation has been a short and focused piece of work, understanding what has changed as the programme draws to a close and whether it is on course to meet its targets. Obviously, it also reflects the impact of Covid – given the pandemic quickly followed the completion of the mid-term evaluation.

This report provides a high-level overview of progress since the mid-term evaluation. It should not be considered an in-depth analysis of the overall programme – largely contained in the overall findings and recommendations within the mid-term evaluation.

Overall, in combination the mid-term and final evaluation have addressed the four core requirements as set out in the evaluation brief:

- Evaluation of how activities being undertaken by LEADER will help to achieve LDS delivery objectives
- How the LAG organisation, administration and processes are managed
- How activities are/will contribute to achieving LDS strategic objectives and vision
- Recommendations to inform any refresh of the LDS

The overall approach to the evaluation has been logic chain based. A key element which has guided the evaluation has been the evaluation framework which was developed at the start of the process.

The activity which has informed this final evaluation has included:

- A review of the latest programme information – including programme finances and Performance Indicators
- A review of approved projects (since the mid-term evaluation) – including application and appraisal documents
- A review of LAG minutes - for meetings held since the mid-term evaluation
- A review of project closure reports
- Limited consultations – including the LAG Chair and Vice-Chair, the CRC Programme Development Officer and CRC Monitoring Officer
- A session at the LAG meeting (March 2022)

2. MID-TERM EVALUATION - FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The mid-term evaluation in October 2019 concluded that the LAG and CRC had made significant progress on the delivery of the Vale of Glamorgan LDS on various fronts. Overall, it concluded that the LEADER programme was well managed, very effective and highly regarded.

Key achievements included:

- The programme being well managed by the CRC team on behalf of the LAG. The feedback received from project partners and stakeholders was that the CRC team were (and remain) very well regarded and provided much of the drive and impetus for activities in the Rural Vale.
- Some good examples of activities which could be regarded as innovative which have been developed and supported. The LAG has been open to adopting some risk with the activities that have been funded.
- A large proportion of the programme's funding was allocated by 2019, and there was a high confidence that it would be fully committed and spent by programme close. The programme was tightly managed by the CRC programme management team, monitored against expected profile.
- The programme was expected to fully meet the Programme Indicators, and exceed them by some margin, by programme closure.

As well as these overall observations, the mid-term evaluation also included a set of recommendations. One of the aspects we wished to address in this final evaluation was understanding whether those recommendations had been considered for the remainder of the programme. This review has been primarily informed through discussions with the CRC Programme Development Officer. Those discussions have indicated that the LAG held a workshop to discuss the mid-term evaluation recommendations and subsequently developed an Action Plan to address those recommendations. Again, this needs to be placed in the context that much of the intervening period has been dominated by the Covid-19 pandemic and some of what could be achieved was impacted. This is reflected in the table below.

Mid-Term Recommendation	Proposed Actions by the LAG	Status
Effectiveness		
1 For the LAG/CRC team to map funded LEADER projects (and their financial allocations) and wider delivery against LDS objectives to understand the full extent of activities contributing to LDS activities. Whilst we recognise that this has largely been done through the Intervention Logic Table, it may be useful to extend this to include financial allocations and non-LEADER activity.	The Intervention Logic Table was updated to show a clearer correlation between the themes and proposed activity. This also included activity not specifically delivered through the LEADER programme but where that activity contributed to the overall objective.	Completed

2 To consider how existing funded activities could be further enhanced/developed so that they could contribute to the Cardiff City agenda, or at least being clear how the agenda is being taken forward elsewhere (following on from recommendation 1).	A review of the Cardiff City Region agenda was planned to be undertaken, with the intention to highlight opportunities where the rural Vale could benefit from developments, or where the LAG could support opportunities.	Activity suspended due to more urgent Covid activity. It was also recognised that much of the planned expenditure was for large infrastructure. Overall, the involvement in the Cardiff City Region agenda has not developed as envisaged.
3 Consider developing small number of additional consistent project-level metrics (on a pilot basis) to better capture project impact. Whilst the project closure reports have sometimes included benefit measurements, they have tended to be specific to the project and not easily aggregated. It may be useful for CRC to assess whether a small number of consistent metrics could be applied to all projects, which could then be aggregated and supplement the existing PIs. We do not advocate this exercise should take too much time, but a quick feasibility assessment may be useful.	Look into the feasibility of this further. Consider all of the existing data capture already in place and determine if any useful new project-level matrix would be helpful. There were some concerns about the amount of time involved if it includes a retrospective look at finished projects in this programme. If it only looks ahead for the remainder of the programme realistically how many projects would this be relevant to and therefore useful?	This was considered but then felt that 'PIs' were not the best way to collate further information, and that a more useful exercise would be to ensure that project completion reports reflected in more detail the value of each intervention. All projects to have an 'end of project' report.
4 To maintain and strengthen focus on supporting *sustainability/ mainstreaming in existing funded projects where appropriate. *Continued activity/longevity of project	Be more visible regarding ongoing support already happening informally with past projects and beneficiaries. Integrate this into a new communications strategy. Ensure that any project 'collateral' such as video, reports, photos, case studies etc, is appropriately archived and easily accessible. This will form one of the key tasks in a CRC website review and be periodically included in communications. Development of a new 'exit interview' and ongoing strategy to include periodic 'touch points' with project beneficiaries (with the suggestion of every six months/ incorporate any additional project level matrix as suggested in recommendation 3 above). Look into the feasibility of including other support points/agencies as part of our website.	Communications have been increased this year with more active socials sharing project content and a focus on cataloguing project collateral, including project videos. The structure for the new website was developed by the team but delivery of this was not started.
Efficiency		
1 To revisit the relationship, and respective roles and responsibilities, between the main LAG and its sub-groups. The main aim is to improve the efficiency between the two groups and may require a slight adjustment to the emphasis of sub-group discussions.	It was agreed to give the sub groups more autonomy. The sub-groups would deal with detail whilst the main LAG would deal with governance, finance and oversight. To nominate a volunteer for each sub group that could present at the LAG, thus reducing the involvement of officers/ council representatives	This was agreed at LAG in Q1 2020. However, subgroup meetings did not take place in 2020 due to Covid so it was not implemented.

2 To implement a better 'feedback mechanism' into LAG Board meetings to help members better understand the real on-the-ground impact of projects. Ideally, this should not be delivered by the CRC team, but based on external organisations coming to meetings and detailing impact.	At least one project sponsor or beneficiary will be invited to present to the LAG at each meeting. A LAG newsletter will be produced following each LAG meeting, that can easily be distributed by LAG members to their respective networks (forms part of communications strategy). The CRC website to be updated following every LAG meeting, and a pro-active social media plan to highlight past and present work, and proactively engage with project sponsors and beneficiaries (again, this forms part of communications strategy). LAG members that are on social media should follow/like/share CRC through their channels to keep up to date with news and spread the word. Consider one LAG meeting a year to be a 'LAG away day' to review the strategy and hear from more project sponsors and beneficiaries.	Project sponsors were regularly invited to speak at LAG meetings. The newsletter and social media activity post LAG meetings did not develop due to the additional strain on staff during Covid. It was not possible to hold a 'LAG away day' due to Covid restrictions but there is an intention to revisit in 2022 – possibly in relation to the planned celebration event (see comment elsewhere).
3 For a greater emphasis on celebrating the success of the programme. For LAG members to take on a wider advocacy role. This may help with widening engagement in the 'hard-to-reach' parts of the Rural Vale community.	To create and implement a pro-active and robust Communications Strategy to celebrate the success of the programme, including social media, traditional press, face to face engagement. CRC and LAG members to seek training opportunities rather than employ third party. LAG members to take on a wider advocacy role, and will be invited to represent CRC at events, and suggest opportunities for the CRC staff and LAG members to raise the profile of the programme.	Working with other LEADER teams in South East Wales to create a case study report and communication strategy to lobby Assembly Members and local councils about the future of community development post Brexit.
Impact		
1 For the LAG to strengthen its focus much more on building capacity and capability within the wider community. For it to consider – alongside the Council – how it can improve organisations to 'self-help' and reduce dependency on the CRC team	Incorporate a more detailed action plan relating to future options once more is known about the pathway for CRC. Create case studies from projects from current programme. Guidance notes specifically for businesses about accessing LEADER funding.	Wider discussions held by Vale of Glamorgan Council about a future pathway for community led local development. Further case studies on CRC website and in wider South East Wales report noted above.

Post mid-term evaluation (late 2019) approvals - Implementation

Through the Implementation strand of the LEADER budget, 30 projects have been commissioned and procured by the VoG LAG itself and implemented by the CRC team, whilst 18 projects have received LEADER grants and are led by organisations external to CRC.

Of the 30 projects initiated by the LAG and led by the CRC team, three have been approved since the mid-term evaluation in 2019. These are:

Procured Commissioning	Final Spend or spend to date (RDPW)	Status
Business Tourism Toolkit	£8,165	Complete
Outdoor Activity Provider Network	£2,000	Complete
Community Mapping 2021/Food Poverty	£5,880	Ongoing

A further 10 projects have received LEADER grant funding since the mid-term evaluation, delivered by external organisations. Of these, five relate to the Vale Film Festival held in 2019. The CRC team had a key role in initiating this Festival. Organisations were invited to submit proposals for hosting events as part of the festival through an open call for interest. The Festival was held in September/October 2019. In addition two projects were referred from the Vale of Glamorgan Council's Vale Heroes scheme - established during lockdown - as they fitted the LDS and were aimed at the Rural Vale.

The 10 projects are detailed below. A full list of all projects with costs is given in Annex 1.

Grant	Final Spend (RDPW)	Status
Homelessness and Scouting (part of Vale Film Festival 2019 [VFF])	£4,439	Complete
A month in the Country (part of VFF)	£1,696	Complete
St Hilary Film Festival (part of VFF)	£898	Complete
Jurassic Coast (part of VFF)	£4,409	Complete
The Village (part of VFF)	£1,182	Complete
Working Wheels	£4,615*	Ongoing
Worms R Us (referred from Vale Heroes)	£1,490	Complete
Construction at Home (referred from Vale Heroes)	£664	Complete
Food Vale Website and Digital network	£5,000	Complete
Food Vale Spring Festival	£6,500*	Ongoing

* This represents the RDPW grant value, although it may not have been fully claimed/spent given the project is still ongoing

Post mid-term evaluation (late 2019) approvals – cooperation:

One project has been taken forward through the cooperation strand – the Colabora project. This has had two phases of activity, the second phase being more recently developed:

- Initially as a transnational project working with seven other partners, focusing on different solutions through which co-working could be developed for rural communities

- A second phase taking forward some of the ideas from Phase 1 and testing these specifically in the Rural Vale. The second phase was impacted by Covid-19 but has nevertheless tested different venues and the appetite for co-working. It is now being continued post LEADER through funding from the UK Community Renewal Fund.

The following briefly describes the projects that have been approved and supported since the mid-term evaluation (late 2019). A full list of all projects, with brief descriptions, is given in Annex 1.

Projects Procured & Commissioned by VoG LAG

Business Tourism Toolkit:
Development of an online 'Tourism Toolkit', a resource that answers all questions, or where appropriate, signposts visitor facing tourism businesses to appropriate platforms and organisations relating to their enquiry. This aims to ensure consistent advice and information given to businesses and also helps to overcome the need to keep responding to similar questions, releasing time of business support professionals for other business support activities.

Outdoor Activity Provider Network:
This project piloted the development of a network to bring together outdoor activity providers in the Rural Vale - following on from a key recommendation in an earlier feasibility study relating to opportunities for developing outdoor activities along the coast of the Rural Vale (Festival of the Sea). The project developed a vision and mission for the network, an online site for member discussions and held in person outdoor meetings – although not enough providers were involved to establish a network at the time.

Community Mapping 2021 – the New Normal/Food Poverty:
Two-part project - firstly to undertake further community mapping activity during the pandemic to help communities re-assess their assets and services needs for a post Covid recovery and help build resilient communities for the future. Secondly, a specific study in Llantwit Major - 'Good Meal for Everyone, Every Day' - which looked at issues of food poverty, again with a view on post-Covid recovery.

Grant funded projects

Homelessness and Scouting (part of the 2019 Vale Film Festival 'The Hidden Here'):
Two-part project – firstly, focused on the story of Robert Baden Powell, founder of the scouting and guiding movement, as told by his granddaughter who lives in the Vale of Glamorgan. Secondly, focused on Big Issue sellers in the Vale with short films telling their stories and screened at the Film Festival, helping to involve marginalised people in the event.

A Month in the Country (part of the 2019 Vale Film Festival 'The Hidden Here'):
This project was to put on the film 'A month in the Country' in St Cadoc's Church, turning the church into a pop-up picture palace' whilst at the same time raising the profile of St Cadoc's recently discovered historic wall paintings to visitors.

St Hilary Film Festival (part of the 2019 Vale Film Festival 'The Hidden Here'):
Two events were held – firstly, a Bollywood night in St Hilary village hall, incorporating a discussion around creating Bollywood in South Wales, a dance session and food. Secondly, silent movies with live music, in St Hilary Church and including a music masterclass for children.

Jurassic Coast (part of the 2019 Vale Film Festival 'The Hidden Here'):
A series of four film making workshops that explored the Vale of Glamorgan Jurassic coastline and screened alongside a dinosaur themed film, whilst also teaching film making and animation skills.

The Village (part of the 2019 Vale Film Festival 'The Hidden Here'):
Film events held at (a) Comeston Lake Village screening several films aimed at children and adults; and (b) the South West Aviation Museum at St Athan, specifically the Aerotech hanger and with a screening of 'Apocalypse Now'.

Working Wheels:
To put in place a mobile office unit which also offers accommodation, a meeting space and comfort stop for Glamorgan Smallholders. A small, second-hand caravan equipped with a computer, printer and broadband connectivity is proposed which would allow smallholders to access online capability and a printer in a clean, quiet space.

Food Vale Website and Digital network:
Development and launch of a bespoke website/digital platform to support the development of a network for the Vale focussing on food-related businesses and activities. The website was intended to be a repository for information and promotion along with opportunities for food businesses to showcase their produce.

Worms R Us – Glamorgan Smallholders (referred from the Vales Heroes programme):
Covid-19 affected access to non-essential vet services and smallholders found it hard to access tests and treatments for worm infestations of their livestock. The project trialed a system which allowed smallholders to carry out their own tests and upload these to a laboratory for analysis, providing test results back to the smallholder.

Construction at Home (referred from the Vales Heroes programme):
A project run by Pinkspiration with the RSPB, providing home constructed bird nesting boxes to communities in the Rural Vale during lockdown. The nesting box kits were constructed by students at Coleg Gwent, so also providing learning and training opportunities.

Food Vale Spring Festival:
Launch of the Food Vale brand was halted by Covid-19. This project developed an online festival helping to drive brand recognition for Food Vale and build an online audience – as foundations for future in person events. It built on the recommendation of an earlier 'Making Sense of Food' report in 2018. The festival included family 'cookalongs', community growing videos and 'Think Global Eat local' online discussions.

Co-operation Projects

Colabora:
A transnational co-operation project working with seven other European partners to learn about developing co-working spaces in rural areas. The initial transnational project has now been succeeded by a second phase at local level within the Rural Vale, testing out the ideas developed in the first phase. An organisation 'Town Square' was commissioned to work with business start-ups on a 12 week 'business school' which was intended to be followed by pilot testing of co-working venues which start-ups could use. The pandemic caused proposals to be revised and a 'co-working festival' was held in the Rural Vale in June 2021, which tested several potential co-working venues for a month. Some have continued to operate, others have not. 'Town Square' has since received a Community Renewal Fund grant to extend the project across three Counties in Wales – including the Vale of Glamorgan.

The major change in context since the mid-term evaluation was completed at the end of October 2019 has been the Covid-19 pandemic and the associated restrictions. As with most activities, this did have an impact on aspects of the programme, as CRC needed to adjust the focus of its work in the short-term as well as the ongoing projects themselves.

The programme benefited from the fact that a large part of the programme budget had been committed before the pandemic. This meant 'managing out' the programme has been more manageable than if a significant part of the programme budget had still needed to be allocated. The main implications of the pandemic were on those already approved projects – some of which were heavily focused on face-to-face contact. Some of these projects adjusted their delivery methods e.g. moving online, whilst other's momentum slowed during this time. This seems an inevitable outcome of the restrictions that were in place.

Another factor was the need for the LAG itself to move to an online format, rather than a physical meeting. This continues to be the form for the quarterly LAG meeting. Whilst this has been managed well, feedback suggests that it has not been ideal and there is a consensus that an online forum is not as beneficial or inclusive as a physical face-to-face meeting. 'Online fatigue' is thought to have also contributed to a waning in attendance in the latter part of the programme, although this can also be partly explained by the wind-down of the programme itself.

Alongside the Covid impact – and also partly an explanatory factor – has been the gradual reduction in resource within the CRC team itself. Some staff members that had a community development/animator role have left to take up positions elsewhere – several of which are within the VoG Council itself (see comment elsewhere). The gradual reduction in the size of the CRC team also reflected the reducing need to provide support for the development and/or procurement of projects. In addition, some team members were also redeployed to 'Covid response' roles across the Council, particularly during the early part of the pandemic. The smaller team have obviously had to prioritise their work more. This is partially reflected in some of the responses to the mid-term evaluation recommendations – some things could not be a priority, particularly in the context of the gradual wind-down of the programme.

However, the feedback we have received is that despite these factors the CRC team did well in 'keeping the programme's wheels turning', as well as continuing to 'hand hold' some projects to ensure they adapted to the new circumstances.

As it stands, CRC now has a small resource in place – largely to deal with the outstanding administrative and financial requirements of the programme.

The other factor in terms of overall context that is useful to highlight has been the uncertainty with regards to the future of (rural) community development. With the ending of the LEADER programme – and no real clarity over any replacement activity – many areas including the Vale of Glamorgan have been trying to understand whether (and how) similar activity could continue. In our view, our work – including the legacy report that accompanied the mid-term evaluation – has demonstrated that there is significant value in

bottom-up community development. It is not easily replicated in other funding programmes, many of which currently seem to have a greater focus on a more centralised delivery model.

In some rural areas it is likely that this type of community development will largely stop when the programme ends. However, in the VoG the value of this type of work – and crucially the skills and experience in the CRC team – has been recognised. The recent approval by the Council to establish a new community development focused team integrating CRC staff within that is to be welcomed and should take away some of that uncertainty which has been associated with the latter part of the programme. This may give some reassurance to projects and community organisations moving forward.

5. LEADER FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

This section reviews the outturn on programme finances and performance indicators. It makes use of CRC monitoring information, in particular delivery profiles for each of the four strands of LEADER finances (based on information as at December 2021 – the latest information available).

Financial Profile and expenditure

The overall budget for the Vale of Glamorgan LEADER programme is set out in the following table, subdivided into the four strands of activity against which LEADER funding is allocated.

VoG LEADER Programme Strand	RDPW Funding	Matched Funding	Total
Implementation	£1,296,749	£324,190	£1,620,939
Animation	£273,000	£0	£273,000
Administration	£182,000	£0	£182,000
Co-operation	£68,249	£17,063	£85,312
TOTAL	**£1,819,998**	**£341,253**	**£2,161,251**

The overall budget allocation has not changed since the mid-term evaluation. However, a reprofiling of the budget was undertaken in 2020 and approved by Welsh Government. This enabled the VoG LEADER Programme to extend its timeframe. In essence this extended implementation activities to December 2021 and other strands to March 2022. VoG Council funding - which had been allocated to underwrite matched funding for LEADER activities but had not been used as extensively as anticipated - is being used to match fund LEADER spending over the longer timeframe.

A further time extension request was then made in September 2021. This extends the end date by a further year, to March 2023. This keeps the LAG active and enables the full completion of projects.

The following table sets out spend against total budget allocations by each LEADER strand - as at December 2021. This indicates actual spend to end of June 2021 plus spend profiled from July–December 2021 and which was scheduled to be claimed from Welsh Government at the end of 2021.

The table also breaks down the implementation budget – by far the largest budget line in the programme – into its different elements. An important point to note is that the final column does not equate to the budget left to allocate. It relates to amount left to claim from Welsh Government. Our discussions have indicated that much of the outstanding sums are already committed, and in some cases, now spent and paid from CRC to project recipients (project grants). However, the RDPW grant has yet to be drawn down from Welsh Government and will be claimed in December 2022 and March 2023.

	Total	RDPW Funding	Total Spend to 06/21	Profiled spend 07-12/21	Total Spend to 12/21	Outstanding Budget to be claimed by 03/23
Implementation Budget: breakdown	£1,620,939	£1,296,751	£1,255,964	£90,157	£1,346,121	£274,818
Procured / commissioned by LAG+	*£320,723*	*£256,578*	*£259,484*	*£9,100*	*£268,584*	*£52,139*
Project grants	*£179,999*	*£143,999*	*£85,426*	*£20,171*	*£105,597*	*£74,402*
CRC staff costs (project officers)*	*£873,344*	*£698,675*	*£781,499*	*£52,944*	*£834,443*	*£38,901*
Project marketing	*£31,003*	*£24,802*	*£15,642*	*£0*	*£15,642*	*£15,361*
Overheads (flat rate 15%)	*£215,870*	*£172,696*	*£113,913*	*£7,942*	*£121,855*	*£94,015*
Animation	£273,000	£273,000	£236,477	£17,250	£253,727	£19,273
Administration	£182,000	£182,000	£157,692	£11,500	£169,192	£12,808
Co-operation	£85,312	£68,249	£24,764	£23,935	£48,699	£36,613
TOTAL	**£2,161,251**	**£1,820,000**	**£1,674,897**	**£142,842**	**£1,817,739**	**£343,512**

+ includes in kind staff costs from community partners   * includes HR budget line

The discussion with the CRC team indicates that the outstanding co-operation budget allocation has been committed to the Town Squares project. The budget in relation to the project grants (Implementation and Co-operation) shown in the above table has been spent (provided to the external organisations) but has yet to be drawn down from Welsh Government - accounting for c£110,000 of the balance.

The CRC team indicate that only three projects have not yet completed activity, whilst some projects have completed but have not yet submitted final claims to CRC. The balance of funding in projects procured/commissioned by the LAG is therefore likely to be spent – a further c£52,000.

VoG LAG has been collaborating with other LAGs in South East Wales to produce a brochure about the impact of LEADER funding. This is nearing completion. Our understanding is that some of the marketing budget is being used for this, as well as ongoing marketing of VoG LEADER activities. From review of LAG minutes we can also see there are plans for producing more case study videos and reports. We have reviewed several of the video case studies which have been produced, and these are helpful in bringing alive those activities which have been supported through the programme. Based on this, the outstanding marketing budget would seem likely to be spent.

There is an outstanding balance of CRC staff time and associated overheads to support the remaining activities across all strands through to March 2023. This is now quite limited, reflecting a reducing CRC staff resource over the past year - as some team members have moved to new roles within VoG Council.

Overall, from our review of the financial information and informed by discussions with the CRC team, whilst this final evaluation is being undertaken 12 months before final completion of all spend, our independent view is that the (near) full budget is likely to be spent by programme close.

When placed in the context of the budget review within the mid-term evaluation, the programme has made considerable progress with expenditure on projects supported through the Implementation strand. It remains the case that a considerable amount of the Implementation budget is associated with CRC team costs (reflecting the core role of the CRC team in animating, developing and supporting projects). It is also the case that the LAG has commissioned a good level of ongoing activity. The CRC team have procured, managed and delivered this activity on the LAG's behalf. The CRC team's role has continued to be very 'hands on'.

Achieving Performance Indicators

The Performance Indicator (PI) targets were extensively revised in 2020, alongside the re-evaluation of the budget and submission of a new profiling of spend to Welsh Government. Based on the experience to that date and further expectations of delivery from committed projects, the PI targets were all revised upwards. The following table sets out how PI targets were revised – for each of the four strands of the LEADER programme.

Revision of indicators - by budget line										
2019 date is as at the Mid-term Evaluation	Implementation		Animation		Cooperation		Administration		TOTAL	
	2019	2021	2019	2021	2019	2021	2019	2021	2019	2021
Feasibility studies	13	**26**			0	**4**			13	**30**
Networks established	3	**8**			3	**3**			6	**11**
Pilot activities undertaken/supported	22	**80**			3	**8**			25	**88**
Community hubs	1	**2**							1	**2**
Information dissemination/ promotional marketing	32	**250**	1	**35**	6	**10**	1	**10**	40	**305**
Stakeholders engaged	81	**450**			10	**15**			91	**465**
Participants supported	400	**6500**			50	**50**			450	**6550**

We have used information set out in VoG LEADER delivery profiles to reflect progress against these revised targets. As with the financial position, it is also the case that not all indicators achieved have yet been reported to Welsh Government. Again, the final column in the table below reflects the balance to be reported by the programme. It does not reflect that they have not been already achieved - some may have been achieved and already been reported to the CRC team.

Implementation Budget	Target	Achieved to date	To be reported 12/21	% Target at 12/21	Outstanding number to be reported 03/23
Number of feasibility studies	26	8	10	69%	8
Number of networks established	8	4	0	50%	4
Number of pilot activities undertaken/supported	80	32	20	65%	28
Number of community hubs	2	1	0	50%	1
Number of information dissemination actions/promotional marketing	250	107	50	62%	93
Number of stakeholders engaged	450	181	100	62%	169
Number of participants supported	6,500	700	2,000	41%	3,800

Co-operation, Animation and Administration Budgets	Target	Achieved to date	To be reported 12/21	% Target at 12/21	Outstanding number to be reported 03/23
Number of feasibility studies	4	0	1	25%	3
Number of networks established	3	1	2	100%	0
Number of pilot activities undertaken/supported	8	2	2	50%	4
Number of information dissemination actions/promotional marketing	55	6	15	38%	34
Number of stakeholders engaged	15	10	2	80%	3
Number of participants supported	50	10	20	60%	20

Again, to reiterate the point above, these tables might suggest that there remains a significant proportion of performance indicators still to be achieved/reported beyond December 2021 - if targets are to be met. However, our understanding from discussions with CRC is that the evidence for outstanding indicators has largely been collected but has not yet been reported to Welsh Government. We have not been able to independently verify this. The next claim is intended to be submitted by CRC in December 2022. It will remain appropriate for the CRC team to maintain a focus on the indicators over the remaining period to ensure the targets are fully met.

6. UPDATE – ACHIEVEMENT AGAINST LDS OBJECTIVES

LDS Objectives and RDPW Themes

The Vale of Glamorgan Local Development Strategy (LDS) set out an overarching aim and four priorities. These are summarised in the following diagram – as discussed in more depth in the mid-term evaluation. In addition, a fifth priority was added during a review of the LDS in 2020, as a collective response to the coronavirus pandemic and the steps the LAG could take to support the VoG Council, other public sector bodies, the voluntary sector and businesses to begin the recovery phase of the pandemic.

PURPOSE: To grow the rural economy in the Vale of Glamorgan - not just for its own sake but to help maintain the natural environment, to support its varied communities and to create vibrant businesses.

PR1	PR2	PR3	PR4	PR5
Create more economic value from the natural and historic environment	Maximise the benefit of being part of the Cardiff City region	Encourage local business and social enterprise to provide local services	Improve digital usage within businesses and communities	Supporting a resilient economy, and communities (New in 2020/21)
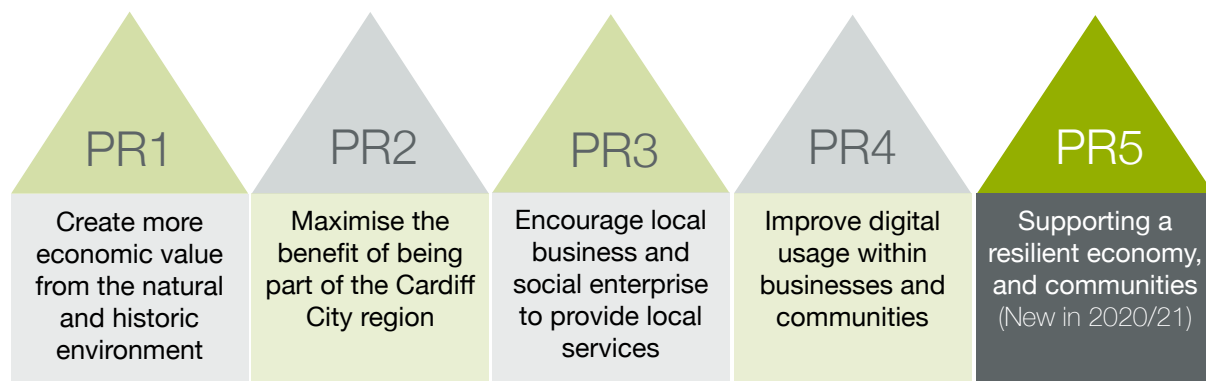
Alongside this, Welsh Government set out five RDPW themes for LEADER, with VoG participating in all five. These are summarised below.

RDPW Theme 1: Attractive Vale	RDPW Theme 2: Business Innovation Laboratory	RDPW Theme 3: Evolving Communities	RDPW Theme 4: Green Community Energy	RDPW Theme 5: Exploiting digital technology
Adding value to local identity and natural and cultural resources	Facilitating pre-commercial development, business partnerships and short supply chains	Exploring new ways of providing non-statutory local services	Renewable energy at a community level	Exploiting digital technology
Cross cutting themes – Sustainable Development, Equal opportunities, Poverty and Social inclusion, Welsh Language				

As discussed in the mid-term evaluation, none of the LDS priorities fit neatly into a particular RDPW theme (they pre-dated the requirement for activity to fit into RDPW themes). However, they do broadly map. This mapping may be found within the Intervention Logic Table – setting out how LDS priority intentions and underlying objectives

have sat within the RDPW themes. This has been summarised in the next subsection, which reviews how supported projects have contributed to the RDPW Themes and LDS priorities.

The LDS priorities have not changed since the LDS was first developed. However, in 2020 Welsh Government asked all LAGs to refocus activities in rural economies and communities to address issues arising from the pandemic. Consequently the VoG LAG added a specific Covid-19 related strand of activity into each RDPW Theme – entitled 'supporting resilient communities'. This supported new projects developed in response to the pandemic, as well as enabling existing projects to adapt to changing circumstances e.g. developing digital tools and skills. Effectively this became an additional strategic intervention of the LDS.

Project Fit with LDS priorities and RDPW Themes

As shown previously – partly in response to the recommendation contained in the mid-term evaluation - the VoG LAG has mapped most of its projects in relation to RDWP Themes, LDS priorities and objectives within the Intervention Logic Table. This has been helpful. We have also added those not previously mapped in the below table. It summarises how the 48 projects that have been supported through VoG LEADER have fitted against both the LDS priorities and RDPW themes. Further detail is provided in Annex 1.

RDPW Theme	LDS Priority	LDS Sub Theme/Objective	No. Projects
ONE Adding Value to the local identity, natural and cultural resources	PR1: Create more economic value from the natural and historic environment	1A Increase the business and employment potential of the coast	4
	PR1: Create more economic value from the natural and historic environment	1B Increase the business and employment potential of heritage assets	6 (2)
	PR1: Create more economic value from the natural and historic environment PR4: Improve digital usage within local businesses and communities	1C Increase the business and employment potential of outdoor activities	2
	PR5: Supporting a resilient economy, and communities	1D – Supporting a resilient economy	(1)
TOTAL PROJECTS - RDPW THEME 1			**12 (3)**
TWO	PR2: Maximise the benefit of being part of the Cardiff city region PR4: Improve digital usage within local businesses and communities	2A Maximise economic benefit to the rural Vale from being part of the Cardiff Capital Region	2
	PR2: Maximise the benefit of being part of the Cardiff city region	2B Explore opportunities for utilising underused and redundant spaces and supporting their redevelopment for business use	3

Facilitating pre-commercial development, business partnerships and short supply chains	PR1: Create more economic value from the natural and historic environment PR3: Encourage local businesses and community enterprises to provide local services	2C Increase use of local produce to add value, shorten supply chains and develop local produce	9
	PR2: Maximise the benefit of being part of the Cardiff city region	2E Explore business needs around the Enterprise Zone/Develop business tourism opportunities	0
	PR5: Supporting a resilient economy, and communities	2F Supporting a resilient economy	1
TOTAL PROJECTS - RDPW THEME 2			**15**

THREE Exploring new ways of delivering non statutory services	PR3: Encourage local businesses and community enterprises to provide local services	3A To identify opportunities for services and assets	1
	PR3: Encourage local businesses and community enterprises to provide local services	3A (1) To raise income from community assets and invest some in community enterprises to support economic initiatives in the Rural Vale	1
	PR3: Encourage local businesses and community enterprises to provide local services	3B To raise awareness of opportunities for local community funded schemes	0
	PR3: Encourage local businesses and community enterprises to provide local services	3C Improve the wellbeing of communities in the rural Vale	11
	PR5: Supporting a resilient economy, and communities	3D Supporting resilient communities	2 (1)
TOTAL PROJECTS - RDPW THEME 3			**15 (1)**

FOUR Renewable energy at community level	PR3: Encourage local businesses and community enterprises to provide local services	4A secure community support for more renewables	2
	PR1: Create more economic value from the natural and historic environment PR3: Encourage local businesses and community enterprises to provide local services	4B research funding and investment models for community-owned renewable energies	0
	PR3: Encourage local businesses and community enterprises to provide local services	4C Energy efficiency and lower-cost renewables as direct ways to tackle local poverty	(1)

	PR5: Supporting a resilient economy, and communities	4D Supporting resilient communities	0
TOTAL PROJECTS - RDPW THEME 4			**2 (1)**

	PR4: Improve digital usage within local businesses and communities	5A increase use of superfast broadband to improve business productivity and support residents - aggregate local demand in order to encourage faster rollout	0
FIVE Exploiting Digital Technology	PR3: Encourage local businesses and community enterprises to provide local services PR4: Improve digital usage within local businesses and communities	5B provide communities with the information needed to exploit digital technology	4
	PR1: Create more economic value from the natural and historic environment PR4: Improve digital usage within local businesses and communities	5C To increase sales and productivity in local businesses – using digital visitor information	(1)
	PR1: Create more economic value from the natural and historic environment PR4: Improve digital usage within local businesses and communities	5D increase sales and productivity in local businesses	(4)
	PR5: Supporting a resilient economy, and communities	5E Supporting resilient communities	(2)
TOTAL PROJECTS RDPW THEME 5			**4 (7)**

As the table illustrates, most activity has tended to focus in relation to RDPW Theme 2 (supporting pre-commercial development) and RDPW Theme 3 (developing new ways of delivering non-statutory services).

A number of projects supported through RDPW Theme 2 have related to local food and craft related projects, including some activities which have developed incrementally through more than one initiative - for example the Food Vale and the Craft Makers Network. Within RDPW Theme 3, five of the 11 projects in 3C (the main area of activity) have all related to one initiative - the Vale Film Festival held in 2019 - where events led by community groups were funded as separate projects. Other projects supported through this theme have focused on health and wellbeing, as well as community mapping of assets and opportunities.

Activity within RDPW Theme 1 (adding value to local identity) has also seen significant activity, building on local assets such as the Heritage Coast and outdoor activities opportunities.

As the table illustrates, the one RDPW Theme which has seen least activity has been that of renewable energy at community level (Theme 4). The CRC team has sought to generate

interest in this through two projects – initially a community renewables event to inspire ideas, and subsequently a project particularly targeted at schools. However, neither project has generated much interest. Discussion with CRC suggests that community groups have not been sufficiently interested in the concept of community led renewables projects, whilst CRC itself did not have specific expertise in renewable energy. The VoG LEADER programme has not been unique in experiencing problems in generating interest through this RDPW theme, with other areas also experiencing this.

RDPW Theme 5 (exploiting digital technology) has also seen fewer projects supported – although it needs to be recognised that several projects spanned several themes including this one.

It is also relevant to note that the mapping of LEADER projects in the intervention logic table also included reference to some non-LEADER initiatives, notably in relation to 2A, 2E and 3B - indicating that other activity helped contribute to these LDS objectives even though they were not directly funded through the LEADER programme.

Overall, our conclusion – as also stated in the mid-term evaluation - is that the VoG LEADER programme has made good progress across its LDS priorities and RDPW themes. This is illustrated by a good spread of projects. The sub-groups focus on each theme in the early part of the programme helped ensure momentum across most of the RDPW themes.

As our earlier work on legacy showed, it can take a while for momentum to build in community-led local economic initiatives. It is clear that some projects supported in the current programme have built on earlier activity from previous programmes. What seems important is finding ways to maintain momentum. In this regard, the fact that the VoG Council has recently approved establishing a permanent community development team within the Council - thus retaining the expertise of remaining CRC staff – should help. It retains the wealth of networking contacts that CRC has established, as well as the experience and knowledge from the LEADER activities themselves. This should provide a better opportunity for this to be shared for the benefit of communities in VoG.

As part of this final evaluation we have reviewed the completion reports and/or video case studies of 21 projects, particularly to explore how key LEADER principles of integration, partnership, networking and community engagement are referenced. This review has also looked at how outcomes and impacts have been detailed. We were keen to understand what the projects saw as their longer-term sustainability and their next steps.

The key points emerging from this review are summarised below under different headings,

Integration, partnership and networking

Of the 21 projects reviewed, eight made particular mention of either integration with other projects and/or with other partnerships - suggesting that some valuable partnerships were established:

- Two projects had been undertaken by a partnership of (three) different organisations (Making Sense of Wellbeing, Vale Tablet Loan scheme)
- Two projects (different to those in the first bullet) had particularly focused on bringing food related organisations together, creating local food partnerships and/or linking food producers with consumers and other organisations (Food Vale, Agora)
- One project had brought venue providers and film organisations together in a film festival tourism project

Eight of the projects touched on networking activities, with some projects being developed specifically to explore the potential to establish networks, such as the Glamorgan Smallholders Association, the Vale Adventure Activities Network and the Craft Makers Network. Interestingly, of these three, two have become successfully established and are now operating independently of CRC support, with their own structures, committees etc.

Overall, the LAG felt that partnership working has represented one of the main strengths in terms of the legacy of the whole programme.

Community engagement

This is a core principle of LEADER and projects have successfully engaged with a wide range of different communities, including business sector groups and partnerships and third sector organisations, as well as 'the community' itself.

For some of the projects, engaging at the local community level has been fundamental to the project – a core rationale. This is particularly so for health and wellbeing related projects. It is also clear from some completion reports that projects have both been impacted by Covid-19 restrictions but have been creative in what they delivered during that time e.g. online family cookery sessions, a community growing video etc. One project noted that during lockdown, several village hall groups had come together online to work jointly - creating links between and across communities. One community led project had sought to turn around what might be perceived as a very negative local event (loss of an old landmark tree) into a positive community celebration and commemoration, again bringing different groups within the local community together.

However, what has been interesting to observe in the project reports is that whilst several projects indicated that activities had been developed in response to requests from within communities, activities had not actually been that well attended when provided. Some learning points were observed, including the types and location of venues and other practical considerations.

Again, a sense of greater community and engagement ownership was seen by the LAG as one of the key legacies that has flowed from the programme. 'Ownership' in this context may not necessarily be a physical asset or space, rather 'ownership' of an issue or agenda. Whilst the CRC team have remained crucial to driving momentum in several cases, there are also examples of where the community has taken greater ownership itself.

Outcomes and Impacts

The project closure reports are written at the end of the delivery period and so inevitably they will not fully capture any longer-term impacts. Project reports have therefore mainly focused on practical issues related to delivering the projects and the tangible outputs achieved.

A number of projects had a focus on digital technology and adoption, commenting on both aspects positively as well as highlighting challenges. From a positive perspective:

- Digital access to practicalities such as village hall bookings have helped to enable better community access to activities
- Building the capabilities of community groups around digital skills has been (and will be) essential for a post Covid world
- It has been valuable learning for delivering online events
- Toolkits and technical information have been developed e.g. the use of websites for promotion and online booking systems. GPS mapping has been produced as part of the projects

In terms of challenges:

- Use of technology has not always worked as expected. Nevertheless, LEADER activity has allowed different systems to be tested which has been a valuable outcome
- It is hard to find a digital platform that works well across all devices and is both user friendly and searchable
- Locating digital technology in third party premises needs a lot of support for the hosts
- A pilot phase focusing on SMS text donations indicated visitors were unlikely to make donations through this channel
- Visitors seemed unlikely to download pdfs of walks leaflets or similar to their mobile phones when visiting locations
- Not everyone in the community has access to digital services – and those who don't still need to be catered for. The pandemic has obviously illustrated this digital gap
- Changes to digital technology can occur quickly and sometimes supersede the chosen technology more quickly than anticipated

It is evident from the project completion reports that some projects have produced valuable toolkits as a result of their piloting activities. For example, the Film Festival event toolkit provides a range of information about hosting community film events; what works, what doesn't work, tips for success etc. This could act as a valuable resource for anyone wanting to host future community film events.

The importance and value of shared learning and knowledge is also noted by some projects as a positive outcome. For example, the Glamorgan Smallholders Association's 'Worms R Us[1]' project described how this project had reinforced collaborative working and sharing of knowledge between smallholders in the Association.

Some projects were feasibility studies – and the pathway beyond this feasibility stage is not always necessarily clear (as discussed in the next subsection). In some instances the outcome has been to not take the pilot project or idea any further. In our view this is a perfectly justifiable and acceptable outcome. What is important in such cases is to both learn from this in terms of whether it might have a future if done differently or at a different time, or if it is just not appropriate. Again it is important to ensure this knowledge is widely shared so that feasibility work is not duplicated, and the learning can inform future projects and programmes.

Sustainability and Next Steps

Of the projects reviewed that commented on next steps and sustainability:

- Two projects were feasibility/pilot projects that concluded that it was not worthwhile/ feasible to pursue the underlying concept (digital tourism information points and Vale Adventure Activities network)

- One feasibility study (local food in schools supply chain study) set out an approach to take forward the idea tested. Whilst the report itself did not indicate if it would be taken forward (it was an externally commissioned report), further discussion with CRC indicates that elements have been progressed by the Council (see the Vale School Catering project discussed below)

- Four projects indicated that they plan to continue the activity post LEADER funding (e.g. Vale Tablet loan scheme, Food Vale Spring Festival)

- One project indicates the activities it trialed can now be self-sustaining and will continue (Worms R Us Glamorgan Smallholders project)

- One project provides a relatively detailed plan of how the partners involved will continue to work together and how they will disseminate findings (Making Sense of Wellbeing project)

- One project achieved what it set out to do and so there are no next steps (Digitisation – Making the most of the archives)

- One project has no funding to continue but indicates it has taken the learning into other areas of its work, whilst another project also has no immediate funding to continue but is looking for this (Creating Havoc for Health)

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[1] This project tested DIY kits for addressing worm infestations in livestock as the pandemic suddenly limited availability of veterinary services, for smallholders

- One pilot project has written up its findings as a toolkit resource for future use by others (Film Festival Event toolkit)
- One project was not fully completed and there were no next steps (Shared Use Commercial Kitchen)

The above indicates that there is a mix of outcomes in terms whether longer-term sustainability can be achieved through those projects supported through the VoG LEADER. As noted earlier, not all feasibility or pilot projects will be necessarily successful and it is clearly better to know this at an early stage – hence trialling. As stated, we see this as a valid outcome if the knowledge is not lost.

Equally there are some very positive stories of longer-term sustainability and development in some of the projects that have been supported. For example, the 'Worms R Us' pilot project proved a cost-effective solution/approach to the smallholders.

The Legacy Report that we prepared alongside the VoG mid-term evaluation illustrated how it takes time for small-scale community led local development to move forward, grow and develop. It should therefore be positive that some of the supported projects can point to a continued future.

One of the key findings from the legacy work was that there is often not a constant, straight line in terms of how projects develop. They can develop quite sporadically, or in different ways from original intentions. The legacy report also clearly illustrated the value of the CRC team in providing a continued source of support – often playing a key role in continued development and beyond the LEADER funding itself. Therefore, our view is that it is positive that VoG Council has recently (March 2022) agreed to fund a new community development team within the Council, with some CRC staff moving to this new team. It is also valuable to note that four of the CRC team have moved into related areas of work in other parts of VoG Council.

Much of the collective memory of LEADER therefore remains within the Council. We feel this provides a good opportunity to ensure that LEADER knowledge is retained, and that the extensive network of contacts they have is retained for the benefit of the rural Vale[2].

Further discussion with CRC around the ongoing sustainability of LEADER projects has highlighted the different ways in which this is happening – beyond the original LEADER support. As examples:

The Community Mapping project is seen by CRC as a flagship project for the LEADER programme, with the community mapping toolkit as something which is going to be core to the work of the new community development team within VoG Council. It also plays other wider roles e.g. helping to feed into decisions around the allocation of S106 funding. The project is well recognised. It has developed a method of community engagement which is valuable, and it will be used as a consultation tool by VoG Council in the future e.g. as a precursor to co-production of projects, ideas etc.

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[2] *The new team will not be rural Vale specific – it will cover the whole VoG Council area, meaning that LEADER principles can be taken forward into other urban and semi-urban areas*

The Coastal Communities Commercial project, which then led to the Dunraven Bay Pop Up Events pilot, has now led to much wider discussions with local landowners such as Dunraven Estate on wider projects in the area. So whilst the pop-up events may not be continuing exactly as piloted, there is wider activity which has led from this work, and which have potential longer-term application.

The Vale School Catering project explored the potential for more local sourcing for the school meals service in the VoG area. At the time, the school catering was being transferred to a Local Authority Trading Company. The knowledge gained from that feasibility work and some of its recommendations are now being used in what is called 'The Big Fresh Catering Company'. As well as school catering, 'Big Fresh' also provides wider catering services in other venues e.g. at Penarth Pier. The innovative business model has recently allowed some profits to be reinvested back into Vale of Glamorgan schools.

The Glamorgan Smallholders Association was originally assisted through LEADER to support a new group of smallholders to come together to share ideas, practices and experiences. The group received a relatively small amount of financial assistance. Since then the group and network has grown and developed – now having 750+ people following its Facebook site. Due to the Covid outbreak all non-essential veterinary services were stopped – including tests and treatments relating to worm infestations of livestock. With the help of further LEADER support, the group established a system that allowed its members to carry out basic tests themselves – uploading results for assessment at a laboratory. This has now become self-sustaining, with this system representing a more cost-effective solution to members.

As part of the LAG session held in March 2022, we asked LAG members what they felt were the main messages that they would give to three different audiences in terms of what they had learnt from the VoG LEADER programme. These audiences were:

🌿 The local community itself

🌿 Vale of Glamorgan Council

🌿 Welsh Government

The outcome of this discussion is shown below and provides an interesting insight from LAG members – many of which have been involved through the lifetime of the current programme.

MESSAGES to . . .

LOCAL COMMUNITY

Pandemic has illustrated great ways of how communities have found new solutions and ways of doing things

Don't just complain - communicate with the Council

Find joint solutions

Don't lose touch

Build on these strengths

Complex network

Level of LAG independence from statutory authorities important

'Usual suspects' have changed

New themes bring forward new people

Happy balance of co-working with VoG Council

WELSH GOVERNMENT

Can't apply a 'one size fits all' policy to local issues - trust is key

Issues are not defined by a 'policy portfolio'

Trust the LAG - as a local place

Take an holistic view - cross departmental

Appreciate the broad church of knowledge provided by LAG

Level of innovation and scope for growth has been facilitated by local focus - not sure it would happen at national level

Don't micromanage and simplify administration of programmes

Don't over complicate!!

How to translate best practice into policy/delivery on wider basis across VoG

Some of the success of CRC/LAG approach is that CRC not seen as part of Council - some concerns about this being lost in new world

VoG Council been supportive to CRC - hands have been tied somewhat

Desire is there to take LEADER learning - about the mechanism of how to do that

Individual skillset important to address this - it's how you work with communities (CRC legacy)

Arms-length body?

Officers and members been receptive to LAG opinions

Approach and skillset

The Council has recognised the CRC approach in the new community development function

Open and constructive dialogue with communities

VoG COUNCIL

In addition, Ash Futures also facilitated a workshop with LAG members, senior Council officers and members and other stakeholders at the end of 2021. This workshop focused on looking at future options for community development within the Vale of Glamorgan. Whilst not specifically focused on the evaluation of the current programme, some of the key lessons learned and principles that formed part of that discussion are useful to reiterate here:

The key messages that attendees conveyed with regards to the CRC experience were:

- **The ability to pilot ideas is important.** Taking away the risk of failure is a huge incentive to be innovative and to learn from the process.
- **An empowering approach to working with communities is key.** Using the skills and expertise within communities and helping people to do things for themselves has been a recipe for success.
- **The presence of the team has been critical.** Having experienced staff, building trust with communities and knowledge of how to get things done has built a strong brand.
- **A degree of independence from the Council has helped to build relationships.** The combination of the CRC team and the Local Action Group has fostered trust and developed new conversations.
- **Good things take time to develop.** Community development takes sustained commitment to get right.
- **Design in challenge.** Creating new ideas and building successful communities often means getting out of one's comfort zone and being prepared to learn different approaches.
- **Money helps.** Some funding to help communities get things started encourages delivery and builds relationships

As you would expect, this feedback at this 'futures' focused workshop is broadly consistent to that provided in the LAG session earlier this year. Importantly, they are also consistent with many of the conclusions that have come out of our consultations (for both the mid-term and final evaluation) and discussions with projects that have been supported (including those supported through previous programmes).

In our view, they reflect the important principles and lessons learned from the programme.

One further specific point to raise in terms of lessons learned from the programme relates to the LAG. The general consensus in our consultations is that trying to maintain a LAG (or similar function) of 20+ members – most of whom provide their time voluntarily – is unrealistic and actually results in an unwieldy and bulky forum. This is further complicated by requiring attendance across the three different 'types' of attendees (public, private, third sector). We would agree with this view. If there is to be a similar type of community-focused advisory function/body set up in the future it needs to be smaller, nimbler and more task focused.

This final evaluation has been a relatively focused and concise piece of work, building on the more substantive activity that informed the mid-term evaluation. It covers a period which has been unique and highly unusual – the Covid pandemic. As with almost every other aspect of life, the VoG LEADER programme was affected. New ways of working had to be found, projects had to adapt their own methods of working with the community, and resources were redeployed onto responding to the pandemic.

The VoG programme benefited from it being an already well-managed programme in the respect that it had allocated the bulk of the programme budget and already had a wide range of supported projects delivering across the community. This last 2 years have been about 'keeping the wheels turning' and providing support where it remains needed. It has done this successfully.

Overall, the key findings that were outlined in the mid-term evaluation have not changed. The VoG programme has been well-run and managed, with the CRC team being a fundamental part of its success. They have been supported by an engaged LAG and a supportive accountable body – the VoG Council. In our view it has been a good and productive relationship.

The programme has supported a range of interesting projects and there has been a reasonably open view of taking an innovative approach to testing potential solutions against some issues that have faced rural communities across the Vale. Some of these have worked and led to ongoing activity, whilst others have not worked as well. This is to be expected. The important aspect is that learning and knowledge is retained to inform future activities. With the LEADER programme ending, we had concerns that there was a risk this knowledge could be lost – undermining the legacy and impact of the programme. The recent decision by the Council to create a community development function – crucially retaining some of the key CRC staff - increases the likelihood that this knowledge can be retained and potentially used in different contexts.

The future of the LAG beyond the programme is less clear. We recognise that there needs to be a purpose to maintaining such an advisory body/function. The absence of any specific purpose or remit would undermine its usefulness. Equally we feel it important to recognise that there is also important knowledge and experience within the LAG itself and retaining this would be useful for future activities – either specifically within rural Vale or wider. Using the knowledge of some LAG members (if willing) may be beneficial in some future community development activities.

In terms of the impact of the programme, this is always difficult to express in any quantified manner. Much of the programme's impact has been in aspects which are difficult to capture in any quantifiable sense. A greater sense of community ownership, cohesion, sense of place etc. have been seen as important but difficult to express. They are fundamentally important though. The general view remains that the limitation within the current programme on not being able to directly support businesses has constrained the economic aspect of the programme. Nevertheless – as expressed in the mid-term evaluation – the programme and the CRC team did develop a range of interesting approaches to try to help support businesses in a more indirect sense.

Finally, the programme has been successful in terms of achieving against its contracted targets – whether they were financial or performance indicators. The latter represents the scale of activity that has been supported through the programme. The feedback from the project closure reports has also been important in explaining how relatively small amounts of financial assistance – and supported by CRC help – have gone a long way. In several instances this now leads to self-sustaining and ongoing activity driven directly by the community - a real legacy of the programme.

Annex 1: List of supported projects as at December 2021

Procured Commissioning	RDPW Final Spend or spend to date (£ RDPW grant)	Status	RDPW Theme	LDS Sub Theme/ Objective	LDS priority
Coastal Communities - commercial opportunities Feasibility Study Study to determine the most viable commercial opportunities, outdoor activities and events to enhance the development of business and employment in the Glamorgan Heritage Coast.	15,486		1	1A, (1B)	PR1
Community Mapping Pilot project exploring new ways of delivering non-statutory services in rural communities through engaging communities in mapping the services and facilities that they have and identifying gaps. Three communities were involved, all areas of potential housing growth (St Athan , Rhoose and Wenvoe). The toolkit developed from this pilot has since been used extensively in the rural Vale.	7,245		3, 5	3A	PR3,
Dunraven Bay Events Pop Up Pilot Following on from the Commercial Feasibility Study, a series of events were piloted, to test the viability of events at this location. This tested both the demand from visitors to attend and the willingness of event organisers to hold them in such a rural location. It led to a pop-up events toolkit for future use	15,004		1	1A, (1B)	PR1
Youth and School Visits Developing resources to encourage younger visitors, family groups and school groups to visit venues and locations in the rural Vale. The project worked with activity providers and attractions within the Vale to develop a choice of itineraries with appropriate resources and marketed under the banner of 'Vale School Trips' by the tourism team in the Vale of Glamorgan Council	12,737		1	1B	PR1
Digital Tourism Information Points and Income From Print A pilot project looking at innovative ways for organisations to generate payment for printed visitor products, reducing grant dependency and covering the cost of printed materials. It offers visitors the chance to make a donation for printed products such as maps and trails, and also offering an option to download the file onto the user's own device. Eight tourism providers were involved in this pilot.	12,906		3, 5	3Ai, (5C)	PR3, PR1, PR4

Project	Spend (£)		Theme	Sub-theme	Priority
PAWs in the Vale - Dog Friendly Tourism Pilot project testing the positives and negatives of a community becoming dog friendly. The project promoted dog friendly accommodation, eateries, attractions, shops, walks and other dog friendly businesses within the rural Vale of Glamorgan.	24,678		1	1A	PR1
Celebrating St Illtyd Exploring ways in which St Illtyd is celebrated, sharing best practice, developing links and partnerships, with a view to putting Llantwit Major on a wider stage of interest	890		1	1B	PR1
Year of….. Visit Wales runs thematic years (e.g. Year of the Sea, Year of Discovery) and this pilot project worked with tourism businesses to make them aware of the annual theme and how they could be exploited. It led to two local projects – Festival of the Sea and the Vale Film Festival (under the heading: Year of Legends).	652		1	1B	PR1
Craft Makers Network Pilot project for artists/crafters to network and co-operate, explore opportunities for innovative sales opportunities and explore developing new workspaces. This project built on crafts projects in earlier LEADER programmes and the desire to develop a common platform for working together.	288		2	2C	PR1, PR3
Community Spirit A networking project which developed from the Community Mapping project, where communities in the rural Vale learn from each other about activities / initiatives, which can help develop and promote community spirit. This element relates to core costs to facilitate the project.	852		3	3C	PR3
Parent and Child Activities Together Flowing from the Community Mapping project, this piloted a series of activities for parents and children to do together in community venues in St Athan, Wenvoe, Rhoose and Ystradowen, to meet needs identified through community mapping.	7,060		3	3C	PR3
Redundant Rural Buildings Explored opportunities to develop new workspaces from redundant and underused buildings in the rural Vale, and assessed the demand for different types of workspace	4,762		2	2B	PR2
Food Vale Event An event hosted by the Food Vale Partnership offering opportunities to contribute to the vision of the food partnership, hear about food initiatives and network with food stakeholders from across the Vale.	1,230		2	2C	PR1, PR3

Project	Spend (£)		Theme	Sub-theme	Priority
Green School Challenge A pilot project to challenge schools to consider green energy and energy saving through a two week 'switch off fortnight' – a free facilitated activity.	2,188		4	4A, (4C)	PR3
Commercial Kitchen Explored the concept of a commercial kitchen in the rural Vale, which would be equipped as a kitchen for hire by producers needing a larger working space, on an ad hoc basis. However, this project did not proceed as planned as the community partner withdrew from it.	643		2	2C	PR1, PR3
Green Community Energy Event An event to showcase the range of support agencies for community renewables, and to show exemplar community projects. Attendees included community representatives and residents in the rural Vale	2,721		4	4A	PR3
Livestock Market Feasibility Study Feasibility study to ascertain the needs of local farmers and determine if a viable multi-purpose livestock market is needed in the area. It concluded that a new market facility could help farmers to diversify and add value to their products through provision of shared facilities such as meat cutting and access to cold storage.	30,000		2	2B	PR2
Business to Business Research Researched the current offer of B2B support within the Vale of Glamorgan, where businesses go for support and what they need from this. Opportunity to create a catalogue/online presence for businesses displaying the B2B support that is on offer.	798		2	2A	PR2, PR4
Cowbridge History society - Making the most of the archives Explored the best ways of providing public access to historical archives at Cowbridge, looking at a range of online options and overcoming concerns such as copyright, accessibility and cost.	0*		5	5B	PR3, PR4
Agora - rural supply chains The Rural Vale participated in a pan South East Wales food thematic group exploring ways to shorten food supply chains, funded through the main RDPW programme. The VoG LAG allocated a specific sum from LEADER to carry out additional activity specifically in the Rural Vale linked to this. It was used to fund a networking event for all food related projects	315		2	2C	PR1, PR3

*No spend, but project completed by volunteers. £1,000 grant initially allocated

Festival of the sea – coastal activities feasibility study and events A two part pilot project; initially a feasibility study into the potential for adventure activity along the heritage coastline (building on earlier studies highlighting opportunities for the commercial opportunities of the coast); followed by a showcase event held in June 2019, providing people with opportunities to try different outdoor activities e.g. coasteering,	29,200	1	1A	PR1
Vale Film Festival A pilot project seeking to exploit the large amount of filming that takes place in the rural Vale e.g. Doctor Who trail, as well as support the idea of developing an evening economy. The project sought to help people understand what they can do to celebrate film in their location	9,159	1	1B	PR1
Cycling in the Vale Feasibility study on the potential for developing cycling in the rural Vale. The main conclusion from the study was that there is a potential market for road cyclists but little off road offer. Subsequently work has been done to explore development of some Vale Cycle trails, packaging cycling with places to eat, stay	38	1	1C	PR1, PR4
Digital Community Venues A pilot project to trial some online booking systems for community venues to help overcome issues of booking. Two community venues are involved in the initial pilot, in Llantwit Major and Llandow whilst discussions were also ongoing for participation by two further venues. The project was extended during lockdown and further village hall groups joined the trial	13,200	5	5B	PR3, PR4
Craft Makers Festival This developed from the Craft Network. It piloted a series of crafts events during September 2019. The main festival weekend took place on 21st-22nd September, with a series of masterclasses and open studios across the rural vale before and after. There were also study trips, and a toolkit developed.	9,599	1	1B	PR1
Vale School Catering Explored the feasibility of sourcing local produce for school dinners in the Vale of Glamorgan and which could be implemented by a newly created Local Authority catering trading company.	11,200	2	2C	PR1, PR3

Vale Digital Skills This spun out of the business to business research which highlighted a need for upskilling. A series of training courses has been procured to cover wide range of topics for individuals and third sector bodies. They range from young people safety online courses for parents to website design and e-commerce. Some are day, half day or evening – to test which options are most useful to potential attendees.	11,928	5	5B, (5D)	PR1, PR3, PR4
Business Tourism Toolkit Development of an online 'Tourism Toolkit', a resource that answers all questions, or where appropriate, signposts visitor facing tourism businesses to appropriate platforms and organisations relating to their enquiry. This helps to ensure consistent advice and information is given to businesses and also helps to overcome the need to keep responding to similar business questions, releasing time of business support professionals for other business support activities.	8,165	1, 2	(1D), 2A	PR2, PR4, PR5
Outdoor Activity Provider Network This project piloted development of a network to bring together outdoor activity providers in the Rural Vale, following on from this being a key recommendation in an earlier feasibility study on opportunities for developing outdoor activities along the coast of the Rural Vale (Festival of the Sea). The project developed a vision and mission for the network, an online site for member discussions and held in person outdoor meetings – although not enough providers were involved to establish a network as such at the time.	2,000	1	1C	PR1, PR4
Community Mapping 2021/Food Poverty Two part project: firstly to undertake further community mapping activity during the Covid-19 pandemic to help communities re-assess their assets and services needs for a post Covid recovery and help build resilient communities for the future. Secondly a specific study in Llantwit Major 'Good Meal for Everyone, Every Day' which looked at issues of food poverty, again with view on services required for post Covid recovery.	5,880	3	3D (5E)	PR5

Grant	RDPW Final Spend or spend to date (£ RDPW grant)	Status	RDPW Theme	LDS Sub Theme/ Objective	LDS priority
Glamorgan Smallholders Network Supported a new group of smallholders to come together to share ideas, practices and experiences. This involved holding regular meetings for an initial period of six months with guest speakers and sharing marketing opportunities for promoting rural Vale products, countryside and activities	764		2	2C	PR1, PR3
Making sense of well-being Piloted a range of wellbeing activities/services to support digital and employability skills. This has included holistic girls only fun fitness sessions, buggy fit, Fitbit Challenge with school students and Get Cooking Classes with parents and children, targeted at the communities of St Athan, Llanmaes and Llantwit Major	6,019		3	3C	PR3
Creating Havoc with Health Pilot project to support people with mental health issues in the rural Vale of Glamorgan who have been hard to reach by facilitating a range of activities including art, drama, creative writing, photography and craft workshops.	6,277		3	3C	PR3
Twt Beech project A project to explore the after-life of a significant tree that was felled in Cowbridge. The project will document a series of works made from the timber and run workshops to share green woodworking and crafts skills using the wood. The project will culminate in an exhibition of works and a toolkit.	10,550		1	1B	PR1
Cowbridge Food Collective - online market Development of a pre-order, online service for Vale residents to purchase food from local producers and collect during a weekly meet at Cowbridge Comprehensive School. Produce is made to order so there is no waste, and consumers know what they can purchase and what they have spent ahead of collection. It was particularly valuable during lockdown.	5,274		2, 5	2C, (5D)	PR1, PR4
The Vale Tablet Loan Scheme A scheme offering the opportunity to loan tablets from rural libraries across the Vale. Its use considerably expanded during lockdown.	5,829		5	5B	PR3, PR4

Voluntary led Youth Clubs This project is piloting a new approach to youth provision by working with rural communities in the Vale. The project will involve training local volunteers to develop 'open access' youth work sessions for young people aged between 11 and 18 years. It has initially worked in Colwinston and Wick.	27,900		3	3C	PR3
Community Spirit A networking project which developed from the Community Mapping project, where communities in the rural Vale learn from each other about activities / initiatives, which can help develop and promote community spirit. Four communities were each financially supported with an award to pilot new events in the community (St Athan, Pendoylan, Peterston, St Hilary)	4,661 (aggregated sum)		3	3C	PR3
Homelessness and Scouting (part of Vale Film Festival 2019) This project had two parts; (1). focused on the story of Robert Baden Powell, founder of the scouting and guiding movement, as told by his granddaughter who lives in the Vale of Glamorgan. (2) focused on Big Issue sellers in the Vale of Glamorgan with short films telling their stories and screened at the Film Festival, so making more marginalised people part of the event.	4,439		3	3C	PR3
A month in the Country (part of Vale Film Festival 2019) This project was to put on the film 'A month in the Country' in St Cadoc's Church, turning the church into a pop up picture palace' whilst at the same time raising the profile of St Cadoc's recently discovered historic wall paintings to visitors.	1,696		3	3C	PR3
St Hilary Film Festival (part of Vale Film Festival 2019) Two events were held: (1) a Bollywood night in St Hilary village hall, incorporating a discussion around creating Bollywood in South Wales, a dance session and food; (2) silent movies with live music, in St Hilary Church and including a music masterclass for children	898		3	3C	PR3
Jurassic Coast (part of the 2019 Vale Film Festival) A series of four film making workshops that explored the Vale of Glamorgan Jurassic coastline and screened alongside a dinosaur themed film, whilst also teaching film making and animation skills	4,409		3	3C	PR3

The Village (part of the 2019 Vale Film Festival) Film events held at (a) Comeston Medieval Village screening several films aimed at children and adults; and (b) the South West Aviation Museum at St Athan Aerotech hanger and with a screening of 'Apocalypse Now'	1,182		3	3C	PR3
Construction at Home (referred from the Vale Heroes initiative) A project run by Pinkspiration with the RSPB, providing construct at home bird nesting boxes to communities in the Rural Vale during lockdown. The nesting box kits were constructed by students at Coleg Gwent, so also providing learning and training opportunities	664		3	(3C) 3D	PR3
Worms R Us (referred from the Vale Heroes initiative) The Covid-19 pandemic hit access to non essential vet services and smallholders found it hard to access routine tests and treatments for worm infestations of their livestock. The project trialled a system which allowed smallholders to carry out their own tests and upload these to a laboratory for analysis, providing test results back to the smallholder.	1,490		2	2F	PR5, PR2
Working Wheels Project to put in place a mobile office unit which also offers accommodation, a meeting space and comfort stop for Glamorgan Smallholders. A small, second hand caravan equipped with a computer, printer and broadband connectivity is proposed which would allow smallholders to access on line capability and a printer in a clean, quiet space.	4,615**		2	2B (2D)	PR2
Food Vale Website and Digital network Development and launch of a bespoke website / digital platform to support the development of a Network for the Vale focussing on food-related businesses and activities. The website would be repository for information and promotion along with opportunities for food businesses to showcase their produce.	5,000		2, 5	2C (5D)	PR1, PR3, PR4
Food Vale Spring Festival Launch of the Food Vale brand was held up by the Covid-19 pandemic. This project developed an online festival helping to drive brand recognition for Food Vale and build an online audience– as foundations for future in person events. It built on the recommendation of an earlier 'Making Sense of Food' report in 2018. The festival included family cookalongs, community growing videos and Think Global Eat local online discussions.	6,500**		2	2C	PR1, PR3

**RDPW grant allocated