

Lessons Learnt from Last Programme

In the autumn of 2013 the Orkney LAG commissioned a Strategic Review and Evaluation of the Orkney LEADER Programme 2007-2013 by a Consultant. Orkney has been involved in the delivery of LEADER funding for a number of years since LEADER I and II were implemented in the 1990's.

LEADER+ 2002-2006

The 2007 - 2013 LEADER programme was preceded by the Northern Isles LEADER+ Programme 2000-06 which covered both Orkney and Shetland. A key recommendation from the evaluation of the former LEADER programme was that Orkney and Shetland should have individual programmes. Therefore, the Orkney Local Action Group (LAG) was formed and subsequently developed their own Business Plan and Local Development Strategy which provided the foundations of their bid to secure funding for the Orkney LEADER Programme 2007-2013.

LEADER 2007 – 2013

Themes and Priorities

The Orkney LEADER Programme 2007-2013 was officially launched in Orkney during February 2009. A full time Orkney LEADER Development Officer (LDO) was appointed during November 2008 and is still currently in post. A part time (0.5 FTE) LEADER Administration Officer (LAO) was appointed during October 2009 and left the post at the end of June 2013. This post was not subsequently replaced. Together, both posts have been an integral part of delivering the Orkney LEADER Programme throughout the islands. The aim of the Orkney LEADER Programme 2007 -2013 was:

“to assist communities to achieve their aspirations for economic and social development through supporting projects of an innovative nature that will increase their long term sustainability – economic, social and environmental”

To achieve the aims of the programmes, Orkney LEADER 2007-2013 identified two main themes and 5 key target groups that would form the basis for targeting support in Orkney.

Themes:

- Revitalising Communities
- Progressive Rural Economy

Target Groups:

- Young people (aged up to 25)
- Young People (aged 25 – 30)
- Women
- Lower paid (Inc. under-employed)
- Economically active, living/moving to fragile areas

Funding Awarded for the Programme

Despite seeking £4 million, the Orkney LEADER programme was awarded £2.11 million and therefore the original baseline figures for target groups, activities, outputs and outcomes detailed in the 2007 business plan in the bid process had to be reduced to reflect the funds awarded.

The total LEADER budget of £2.11 million was split between £570,000 of LEADER funding and £1.54 million of convergence funding.

During the course of the LEADER programme, additional funding was allocated by the Scottish Government to the Orkney LEADER 2007-2013 programme. This included;

- An additional £200,000 as Orkney's share of transferring measures 321 and 241 from Rural Priorities, awarded in late 2010.
- An additional £38,500 awarded on the basis of the good performance of the LEADER programme in Orkney, awarded in spring 2012

The Orkney LEADER Programme 2007-13 was able to commit all funding. Despite being allowed to commit up to 20% of the total LEADER programme budget to administration, only £205,000 was allocated for this task (8.73%). This left £2,143,500 to be allocated to projects.

A key role for the LEADER Development Officer (LDO) was to provide initial enquiry advice to prospective applicants regarding the LEADER programme and the suitability of their project for funding. Advice support ranged from basic information requests to onsite visits to discuss projects in finer details and guide applicants through the application process.

The Orkney LEADER Programme 2007-2013 has enabled 75 projects with an anticipated combined value of £5,979,442.82 to be undertaken. The funding made available through LEADER and Convergence funding totalled £2,375,742.04 (39.73% of total project value). This funding has been matched by a further £3,456,960.03 of private and public funding. In addition, there has been a significant amount of in-kind work undertaken which is valued at £146,740.75.

This demonstrates the value of the Orkney LEADER programme as a significant and valued source of funding which has been pivotal in attracting considerable match funding to deliver nearly £6 Million worth of projects that has benefited communities throughout Orkney.

Table 4.1 Funding Type

	No of Projects	% of Project Total	Value	% of Total Value
Capital	20	26.7%	£977,194.45	41.1%
Revenue	55	73.3%	£1,398,547.59	58.9%
Total	75	100%	£2,375,742.04	100%

The table above shows the split of LEADER funds between capital and revenue projects. Although there were a higher number of revenue projects approved (73.3%) the amount of funding awarded to capital projects was just over 40%.

Case Studies

The LAG have selected four case studies which showcase the success of LEADER 2007-2013 and are examples of what could be built on for the future 2014 – 2020 Programme.

Title – Orkney Renewable Energy Forum Development Manager.

Applicant – Orkney Renewable Energy Forum (OREF).

Funding awarded - £52,382 LEADER grant (47.04% project costs, totalling £111,364).

Overview – OREF was established in 1999 and has been instrumental in facilitating the development of the renewables industry in Orkney. The rapid expansion of onshore wind capacity and the prospects of more wave and tidal energy create both challenges and opportunities for the Orkney Islands. Orkney already has some 350 jobs in the renewable energy sector. Forecasts suggest that this number will rise to around 1000 by 2020. This project provided a Development Manager post to fulfil the partnership's objectives which include technology adaption within both businesses and communities, support for infrastructure that creates the opportunity for new and innovative development, and working with local and national groups promote a low carbon economy. This will ensure that Orkney has professional leadership to represent this internationally important sector locally.

Title – Kirkwall Business Improvement District (BID): Connect with Kirkwall.

Applicant – Kirkwall Town Centre Partnership.

Funding awarded - £24,205 (46.18% project costs, totalling £52,410).

Overview – This project provided a BID Manager to carry out the Kirkwall BID project and associated activities. The BID Manager has been involved in – a Shop Local campaign; introducing more events in to the town centre, including for example a

Christmas Festival; provision of a web site to encourage web marketing; improved Christmas lighting; engagement with the Tourism sector on liner visits; engagement with OIC on car parking, traffic management and improved road signage; and enhancement of the BID area through co-operation with the proposed Kirkwall Town Heritage Initiative / Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme operated through Historic Scotland.

Title – Connect.

Applicant – Voluntary Action Orkney.

Funding awarded – Phase 1: £19,300 LEADER grant (19% project costs, totalling £101,579). Phase 2: £45,340 LEADER Grant (35.15% project costs, totalling £128,989).

Overview – This project involved working with young people who had experienced severe barriers to employment through lack of organisational skills, homelessness, substance abuse, etc. and who required support and training before attending the employment services offered within Orkney, such as Get Ready for Work and Moving On. These young people have opted out of the education system but are ineligible for job seekers allowance and due to their erratic life patterns lack the ability to find or maintain employment. They need to learn, for example, the required discipline of regular attendance. Both phases of the overall project focussed on one to one, tailored personal and skills development within a dedicated environment to ensure that these young people gain the confidence, skills and commitment that will enable them to successfully move on to the more formal programmes/opportunities offered by partner agencies. The service therefore will be innovative compared to those previously provided.

Title – Development and expansion of the Orkney Fossil & Heritage Centre.

Applicant - Orkney Fossil & Vintage Centre Ltd.

Funding awarded - £63,475 (46.35% project costs, totalling £136,950).

Overview – This project involved creating new exhibitions interpreting the Orkney and international fossil and crystal collections owned by the Centre as well as a new gallery to house an exhibit showcasing the building of the Churchill Barriers (which is being created by the Scapa Flow Landscape Partnership). Main activities included - create a new gallery to house the 'Building the Barriers' exhibit; create new exhibitions displaying of the Centre's geological collections; improve the external appearance of the Centre and bringing the forecourt area into public use; extend the car park and provide cycle racks; and more active marketing.

Key Lessons

The LAG has considered key lessons for the future based on its experience of running LEADER 2007-2013. These include:

LAG Structure

There is no need to reinvent the wheel for a future LEADER programme, keeping the current structure and systems in place will provide a strong basis for a new LEADER.

The LEADER 2007-2013 was well organised, managed and delivered using this structure. The LAG comprises a strong representative range of bodies that work well together for the greater good of Orkney. A number of LAG members have been involved in previous LEADER Programmes and were able to provide continuity as new members joined and other left the LAG. There is strong representation of all sectors on the existing LAG and LAG members are good at promoting LEADER within their sectors. As well as this, the LAG is comprised of local people who play an important part in strengthening the public participation element of the LEADER Programme in Orkney. These members bring their own experiences and knowledge to the LAG, beyond their representative groups. As a result there is a good awareness of LEADER In Orkney.

Solid Preparation Work

A lot of good background work was done in setting up the current LEADER programme. Systems and procedural documents managing LEADER were in place at the start of the Programme ensuring there were no unnecessary delays for projects. There was also a good general awareness of LEADER locally.

LEADER Staff

The existing LEADER staff structure worked well and the Programme should continue to have locally based staff. The experienced staff, LAG members and LAG chair have all helped the programme to be successfully organised, structured and delivered. There was streamlined management and synergy through having the LAG chair and LEADER staff based in the same premises. Orkney Islands Council acting as lead partner for LEADER and the backup resources that were available for support, all helped to contribute to the success of the Programme.

Overall the Orkney LEADER Programme 2007-2013 was well run and administered; it is something that the LAG and LEADER staff are very proud of.

The LAG are in agreement that the existing LEADER programme has been a success and that it provides a good template upon which to base a future LEADER programme. There is no requirement for any major changes or alterations to be made. It is a case of using the current LEADER programme as a solid foundation for a new scheme and doing some fine tuning where required.