

Evaluation of the Arwain Sir Benfro
LEADER scheme in Pembrokeshire
Final report

December 2021



Wavehill: social and economic research

- Wales office: 21 Alban Square, Aberaeron, Ceredigion, SA46 0DB (registered office)
- West England office: 2-4 Park Street, Bristol, BS1 5HS
- North of England office: Milburn House, Dean Street, Newcastle, NE1 1LE
- London office: 52 Cecile Park, Crouch End, London, N8 9AS

Contact details:

Tel: 01545 571711

Email: info@wavehill.com

Twitter: @wavehilltweets

More information:

www.wavehill.com

<https://twitter.com/wavehilltweets>

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Authors:

Endaf Griffiths, Sam Grunhut, Nikola Vousden

Any questions about this report should be directed in the first instance to Endaf Griffiths (endaf.griffiths@wavehill.com)

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Client contact:

Iwan Thomas, Chief Executive, PLANED

The Old School, Station Road, Narberth, Pembrokeshire, SA67 7DU

Tel: 01834 860965 | iwan.thomas@planed.org.uk

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Executive Summary

Introduction

This is the final report of an independent evaluation of the implementation of the LEADER scheme in Pembrokeshire from April 2015 to its closure at the end of December 2021.

First introduced in the 1990s, and active in Pembrokeshire since then, the LEADER approach includes seven specific features and, importantly, is dependent on all of these being employed together:

- Area-based development strategies
- Bottom-up elaboration and implementation of strategies
- Local public-private partnerships: Local Action Groups
- Integrated and multi-sector actions
- Innovation
- Cooperation
- Networking.

It is these features, and their integration, that define LEADER as a specific approach to rural development and community-led local development (or 'CLLD') more generally.

LEADER is one of several schemes within the Welsh Government Rural Communities - Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 (hereafter referred to as 'the RDP') funded by the Welsh Government and the European Union (EU) through the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD).

For the current RDP programme period, LEADER has been implemented in Pembrokeshire by the Arwain Sir Benfro Local Action Group (the LAG) with PLANED undertaking the administrative and financial operations on their behalf.

There is no commitment on the part of the Welsh Government to any follow-up to the LEADER scheme in Wales at the time of writing. Recommendations are therefore made below for consideration in the future, if and when a new LEADER or similar scheme is introduced in Pembrokeshire.

Some key numbers:

- A total investment in Pembrokeshire of £5 million
- 26 meetings of the LAG to manage the implementation of the scheme
- 71 pilot, locally developed, projects supported
- 865 stakeholders engaged
- 5,356 participants supported
- 43 jobs safeguarded
- At least £2.5 million of follow-up funding secured by projects funded.

The allocation of funding

The Arwain Sir Benfro led LEADER scheme in Pembrokeshire was, between April 2015 and December 2021, responsible for the investment of just over £5.2m in the local area, 80 per cent of which was spent supporting the implementation of projects. Another £1.2m has been drawn in as match funding provided by the projects that have been supported. This supported the implementation of 71 projects at an average of around £30,000 per project.

The funding available to support projects was committed early. This demonstrates the high demand for support in the area and an awareness on the part of the LAG of the importance of committing funding early to ensure that it is fully utilised. However, it also meant that there was no funding available for projects during the latter stages of the scheme and no opportunity for the LAG to identify and address any potential gaps in the activities being undertaken. We believe that there is an argument that this should have been considered with at least some funding ringfenced for the latter stages of the scheme.

Recommendation 1: The potential to reserve a proportion of funding for the latter stages of any future scheme should be considered to allow the LAG to support any new projects that may emerge or respond proactively to any gaps in the activity that may become apparent.

Performance indicators

The number of performance indicators (and associated targets) in place to monitor the performance of the LEADER scheme in Pembrokeshire (and in Wales as a whole) is limited. Using a limited set of indicators has benefits from an administrative perspective but means that we have limited data with which to assess the achievements of the scheme. We are however not overly critical of this approach as identifying meaningful indicators for a scheme as broad as LEADER is difficult. It is something that should however be reviewed as part of the development of any future scheme with several potential additional indicators suggested within this report.

Recommendation 2: Consideration should be given to the use of a more comprehensive set of performance indicators as part of any future scheme.

The strategy

The Local Development Strategy (LDS) is an important element of the LEADER approach described within programme guidelines issued by the European Commission as 'the roadmap for LEADER implementation with the LAG selecting and supporting projects, according to the contribution they make to the goals of the strategy'.¹

¹ Guidance produced by the European Network for Rural Development on the development and implementation of the LDS can be found here: https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/sites/enrd/files/enrd-guidance_lsd.pdf

The LDS developed by the Arwain Sir Benfro LAG was, intentionally, very broad, as is generally the case for LAGs across Wales. The rationale for such an approach is that it does not restrict the type of projects that can potentially be supported which, especially for a scheme intended to support projects that are developed from within the local community (or 'bottom-up'), is logical, as LAG members generally argued. However, such an approach provides little 'strategy' for the utilisation of the funding available. The themes of the scheme in Pembrokeshire have generally been used to guide how the LEADER funding can be used, rather than as a means of prioritisation.

Again, we would not be critical of this approach. Whether or not it is a good thing is debatable depending on how LEADER funding is going to be utilised. If the intention is to support 'grass-roots' projects as they emerge (which has been the focus in Pembrokeshire generally), the approach is the right one. However, it also means that the available funding is inevitably spread relatively thinly and across a wide range of largely independent projects as has also been the case in Pembrokeshire, as discussed further later. The alternative approach is obviously to be more focused, targeting the funding available and, potentially, seeking to support a set of more joined-up projects that can achieve a strategic goal. Such an approach however probably limits the range of organisations that can access the support available. Neither approach is 'wrong' with the key being to be clear about the approach that is being used, which would seem to have been the case in Pembrokeshire.

The Local Action Group

The role of the LAG within the LEADER approach is to be a group which represents the local area and its population. It leads the development process with no interest group nor public authorities having a majority in the decision-making process.

Attendance at LAG meetings in Pembrokeshire was good; there were 26 LAG meetings over the lifetime of the scheme with 11 members attending each meeting on average. Seven members have attended 16 or more of the meetings suggesting that there has been good continuity over the period. This is important for any scheme where decisions are being made on an ongoing basis and there is a need to be aware of and understand decisions that have been made previously.

The evaluation has found that being a member of the Arwain Sir Benfro LAG has generated a range of benefits for the individuals concerned especially in terms of networking, developing new relationships, and becoming familiar with activities ongoing within the county. This is positive and is an important outcome of the LEADER approach which is as much about the process of managing and delivering the scheme as it is about the projects that have been supported.

It is important to recognise that many LAG members are volunteers, and the scheme could not operate without their involvement. Identifying and maximising the benefit that they get because of their participation is therefore important. It is also a means of attracting members to the group.

Recommendation 3: Ways of maximising the benefits that LAG members gain because of becoming involved in LEADER should be explored as part of the development of any future scheme.

Views on the performance of the LAG including the quality of the discussions at meetings were generally positive. However, there have been concerns that the LAG has operated too much as a 'grants assessment panel' which needs to be noted. If the LEADER approach is being effectively implemented the role of the LAG should be much broader than to just consider applications for financial support. Their role should also include, for example, assessing the needs and opportunities in the area, networking with other LAGs, and reviewing what projects have achieved and lessons learnt. Adequate attention must be paid to those broader roles of the LAG.

Recommendation 4: The role of the LAG beyond the assessment of applications for financial support is an important part of the LEADER approach. This should be considered as part of the development of any future scheme in Pembrokeshire.

Animation and supporting applicants

Feedback from applicants on the support they received from the Arwain Sir Benfro team was good with no significant issues in respect of the application process identified which is positive. A key reason for this would seem to be the role of PLANED who can draw on their extensive experience of working in Pembrokeshire and with the local community in the delivery of their administrative role.

A key objective of the 'animation' element of the LEADER approach is to 'make things happen' and to draw individuals and groups into rural development for the first time. During a workshop with LAG members for this final phase of the evaluation, the success of the scheme in Pembrokeshire in that respect was highlighted. In many cases, however – although not all – those involved in managing and delivering projects supported by Arwain Sir Benfro had relevant, and sometimes substantial, previous experience.

It is important to note that this is not necessarily a bad thing with those with relevant experience being able to draw upon that experience while delivering their projects and develop the new and innovative approaches that LEADER is seeking to support. It would however be wrong to suggest that a key outcome of LEADER in Pembrokeshire has been to support applicants getting involved in rural development for the first time although there are instances where this has been the case. Importantly, the vast majority of those involved in delivering projects did however say that their involvement with Arwain Sir Benfro had a positive influence on whether they would become involved in rural development projects in Pembrokeshire in the future. This is, again, an important positive outcome.

The animation element of the LEADER approach also provides the resources to work with the local community and stakeholders to identify and develop projects. It would seem fair to say that, in the main, the work of the Arwain Sir Benfro team has been reactive, responding to very high levels of demand for support across Pembrokeshire. Again, we would not be overly critical of this approach given the high levels of demand for support and examples of a more proactive approach were given during discussions on this matter such as work with the local young farmers' groups. However, the potential to have been more proactive seems clear. The risk that some groups from within the community may not get the opportunity to develop ideas and submit applications for support in a highly competitive environment where those with substantial experience in the field of rural development are applying for funding also needs to be considered.

Recommendation 5: Ways in which the animation team could be more proactive working to develop projects with groups from within the local community who are under-represented in the applications for support being received should be explored as part of the development of any future scheme. The potential to ringfence a proportion of funding to support projects developed by those with no previous experience in delivering rural development projects in the area should also be explored.

Cooperation

Only four cooperative projects have been funded as part of the LEADER scheme in Pembrokeshire. Levels of cooperation with LAGs and officers from other parts of Wales or indeed across Europe have not therefore been substantial. This is a considerable missed opportunity, especially in respect of the opportunity to cooperate with LAGs from other parts of Europe given that this is the last iteration of the LEADER programme in Wales because of the UK's exit from the European Union.

A key reason for the lack of cooperation would seem to be, a reluctance to, and a lack of time on the part of officers to work with their counterparts in other areas to develop such projects. This is something that we can understand, especially given (a) the high demand for support from within Pembrokeshire which dominated the time of officers, and (b) sole focus on the county. Nevertheless, cooperation is a key feature of the LEADER approach which can generate substantial benefits in terms of learning from other areas and so on.

Recommendation 6: There should be a greater focus on developing cooperative projects with other LAGs as part of any future scheme (assuming that such an opportunity is part of any such scheme).

Innovation

Innovation is a cross-cutting priority of the LEADER scheme. The focus on innovation is based on the argument that doing "more of the same" is unlikely to enable an area to reach its full potential and that new solutions to existing problems should be sought. The objective is to encourage and support new, forward-looking, and entrepreneurial approaches and solutions to local issues and to share and transfer that experience.

There has been an emphasis on supporting pilot and innovative projects as part of the Arwain Sir Benfro scheme with several of the projects supported being clearly innovative. However, there is an argument that it may have been appropriate to have a greater focus on activities which are more clearly innovative as part of the scheme. There is a link between this issue and the previous discussion about the potential for a more proactive approach on the part of those working with groups and communities to develop projects. We would argue that one of the areas where the team could potentially have been more proactive was in supporting stakeholders and groups to use creative problem-solving techniques, for example, to develop new and innovative approaches to realise opportunities or tackle long-standing issues. One of the problems of a reactive approach is that it assumes that new and innovative ideas and project proposals exist in the local area, which may not be the case, especially amongst groups and communities with less experience in engaging in rural development activities.

Recommendation 7: The possibility of ring-fencing a proportion of funding to support especially innovative ideas and projects should be explored as part of any future scheme as a means of ‘pushing the boundaries’ in terms of the level of innovation within the scheme. The potential to develop a programme of support for local communities to think creatively and develop new and innovative solutions should also be explored, to be delivered as part of future animation activities (see Recommendation 5).

There is also a tendency within LEADER (not just in Pembrokeshire) to treat projects being supported as ‘one-off’ pilots, which once completed are either mainstreamed or not. Innovation is however often an ongoing process with ideas going through several iterations and pilots before they are mainstreamed. The potential need to revisit ideas and projects that have already been funded by LEADER to consider the need to support a further iteration of the pilot should therefore be considered, although that would never seem to be discussed with the emphasis on supporting applications received.

Recommendation 8: Some pilot projects warrant a second attempt or further development. As part of any future scheme, alongside the consideration of new project ideas and applications, the LAG should, on an ongoing basis, review project evaluation forms to consider whether existing or previous pilot projects should be evolved (or combined with other pilots) into new or phase 2 pilots.

Completing the cycle: capturing and sharing lessons learnt

The importance of completing the ‘innovation cycle’ for projects needs to be emphasised which should include a comprehensive analysis of lessons learnt, etc. as well as the effective dissemination and sharing of that information. LAG members were not clear about the outcomes of projects that had been supported, suggesting that more could have been done to capture and share information in this regard. There is also a concern that the lessons learnt from the current scheme will be lost, especially if there is a gap before any successor scheme is introduced, which is inevitable given the lack of clarity on the matter at the time of writing.

Recommendation 9: The ‘innovation cycle’ should include a review of what has been achieved, lessons learnt, and so on. There should be a greater emphasis on these elements as part of any future scheme (linked to Recommendation 8) with projects reviewed as they near completion and discussions on these issues at LAG meetings.

Recommendation 10: Consideration should be given to the development and sharing of a compendium of ‘learning’ from the Arwain Sir Benfro scheme. Such a resource could then be used if and when a future scheme is being developed in Pembrokeshire and ensure that the lessons learnt from the current scheme are not lost.

Achievements of the projects supported

Arwain Sir Benfro has succeeded in supporting a wide range of projects and activities. Feasibility studies have been a clear feature of the scheme with tourism, heritage, and culture prominent in terms of the sectors where projects have been active. Projects have delivered a range of services including food poverty, child poverty, health & wellbeing, eco-therapy, climate change and tackling isolation and loneliness. As well as funding numerous studies, Arwain Sir Benfro funding was used to employ staff to support the development and delivery of activities which is a direct route of building capacity within the organisations in question. There has been a clear emphasis on making the best possible use of the resources and characteristics of Pembrokeshire, particularly in respect of the renewable energy theme.

It is difficult to argue that the range of projects supported has achieved any of the ambitions or objectives set out with the LDS. Rather, they are a collection of projects working within the themes identified within the LDS. Also, as previously noted, there are no clear links between most of the projects and no strategy in terms of the projects supported, the focus being on providing funding that allowed local groups and organisations to pilot new and innovative approaches in a range of different themes and areas. The difference the scheme has tried to make is to give local groups and organisations the opportunity to test or try something new.

Most projects felt that it was at least unlikely that their project would have progressed (or at least, it would not have progressed as quickly or in the same way), without the support they received. This is important in terms of the added value of the Arwain Sir Benfro scheme.

Several themes were apparent when projects described what they had achieved: confirming the viability of an idea (or not), developing skills & abilities, increasing collaboration, strengthening relationships, disseminating information, directly improving people's lives, enhancing the local area, and created employment opportunities. These are positive and important outcomes generated by the projects supported.

The key outcome for a LEADER scheme is however perhaps the legacy of the projects that have been funded. What has happened since the LEADER support came to an end? The evaluation has found positive outcomes in that respect. In particular, several projects have been able to secure significant amounts of funding as follow-ons to the pilot activities and/or feasibility studies supported by Arwain Sir Benfro, with a total of more than £2.5 million. This is a significant and positive outcome for the Arwain Sir Benfro scheme and demonstrates the value of this type of intervention.

1 Introduction

This is the third and final report of the evaluation of the implementation and outcomes of the LEADER scheme in Pembrokeshire as delivered by the Local Action Group for the area, Arwain Sir Benfro.

The first report (March 2019) focused on introducing the LEADER approach, its delivery in Pembrokeshire and setting out how the evaluation will be undertaken. The second formative mid-term report (March 2021) assessed the delivery of the programme within the county to date to inform delivery over the remaining lifetime of the programme. This summative final evaluation report has a focus on assessing the outcomes, impact and added value of the programme.

This report draws on the research undertaken to inform the mid-term as well as the final phase of the evaluation, which were:

Mid-term (June/July 2019)

- Telephone interviews with 17 LAG members and three members of staff
- Telephone interviews with 54 representatives of projects supported by the programme, representing 62 of the 70 projects supported at the time of the research.

End-term (November 2021)

- A workshop with LAG members and staff
- Telephone interviews with 49 projects
- Three case study interviews.

A review of the monitoring data and other information about Arwain Sir Benfro's activities and projects as held by PLANED was undertaken as part of both phases, although the review was more detailed for the end-term phase.

The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

- Chapter 2 provides an overview of the LEADER scheme and approach, as well as its implementation in Pembrokeshire
- Chapter 3 reviews the expenditure and performance indicator data for the scheme
- Chapter 4 then considers how the LEADER approach has been implemented in Pembrokeshire
- Chapter 5 provides information on the projects that have been supported
- Chapter 6 draws on a survey of the projects supported and case studies produced by the Arwain Sir Benfro team to consider the outcomes of the support provided
- Chapter 7 includes several case studies that provide more detailed information for a selection of the projects supported, and
- Finally, Chapter 8 sets out the conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation.

2 The LEADER scheme and its implementation in Pembrokeshire

For ease of reference and to provide context for the discussion that follows, this chapter provides a brief overview of the LEADER scheme, the features of the approach and its implementation in Pembrokeshire.

Key points

- LEADER is a scheme within the Welsh Government and EU funded Rural Development Programme for Wales.
- It is implemented by applying ‘community-led local development’ and is built on several specific characteristics often referred to as the ‘LEADER approach.’
- The LEADER scheme in Pembrokeshire, delivered by the Arwain Sir Benfro Local Action Group, ran from April 2015 to December 2021.
- The total expenditure of the LEADER scheme in Pembrokeshire was £4.9m with 80 per cent being used to fund projects.

2.1 Overview of the LEADER scheme and approach

2.1.1 The scheme

LEADER is one of several schemes within the Welsh Government Rural Communities - Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 (hereafter referred to as ‘the RDP’) funded by the Welsh Government and the European Union (EU) through the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD).

The current LEADER scheme in Wales consists of 18 LAGs covering eligible wards (i.e., the rural areas) in 21 of the 22 local authority areas across Wales including Pembrokeshire. The total value of the scheme is just over £47million which funds each element of LEADER in each area including administrative and implementation costs.

Whilst the Programme period is 2014-2020 expenditure can continue until the end of 2023. The Welsh Government originally approved LEADER scheme projects for an initial implementation period of seven years. However, LAGs were given opportunities to revise their delivery profiles during implementation. Accordingly, some LAGs will cease implementation earlier than others, with activity in some areas scheduled to end at the end of 2021 (as is the case in Pembrokeshire) or early 2022 whilst others will continue until June 2023.

Activities under the Welsh LEADER Scheme must also be linked to one of the five LEADER themes for Wales, which are:

1. Adding value to local identity and natural and cultural resources
2. Facilitating pre-commercial development, business partnerships and short supply chains
3. Exploring new ways of providing non-statutory local services
4. Renewable energy at a community level
5. Exploitation of digital technology

Further, activities under LEADER must address one or more of the aims and objectives of the LDS for the area as developed by the LAGs in question; those developed for Pembrokeshire are introduced below.

Finally, projects must address one or more of the Cross-Cutting Themes where it is appropriate to do so within the context of the project, the activities expected to be delivered and the expected outputs or results:

1. Equal Opportunities, Gender Mainstreaming, and the Welsh Language
2. Sustainable Development
3. Tackling Poverty and Social Exclusion

This is in addition to the three European Commission set Cross-Cutting Objectives for the Programme which are:

1. Innovation
2. Environment
3. Climate Change adaption and Mitigation

2.1.2 The LEADER approach

LEADER is a local development method which has been used for over 20 years to engage local actors in the design and delivery of strategies, decision-making and resource allocation for the development of their rural areas. The acronym 'LEADER' derives from the French phrase 'Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l'Économie Rurale' which means, 'links between activities for the development of rural economy'. The approach was devised in the 1990s in response to what was perceived by the European Commission to be the failure of traditional, top-down policies to address problems faced by many rural areas in Europe.

The seven features of the method (often described as 'an approach') are shown in the graphic over the page.

Figure 2.1: The LEADER approach



As a **Community-Led Local Development (CLLD)** initiative, LEADER is an integrated development process designed to engage, enable, resource, and empower local communities in undertaking their own local development.

LEADER is implemented by a **Local Action Group (LAG)**, delivering a **Local Development Strategy (LDS)** that they have developed and animation/capacity building activities within the local community which they oversee. LAGs must be constituted by representation from the; public, private and third sectors.

Animation is a key feature of LEADER (specifically the ‘bottom up’ element of the programme) and can include a range of activities, such as:

- Working to ‘empower’ local people and/or organisations and their willingness to face local challenges or opportunities through the development and implementation of projects (linked to the LDS)
- (Not directly linked with the LDS or a specific project) Working more generally in the local area and with the local population to, for example, enhance the awareness of local heritage.

Innovation is one of the original and fundamental strategic principles in LEADER. The focus on innovation is based on the argument that doing ‘more of the same’ is unlikely to enable an area to reach its full potential and that new solutions to existing problems should be sought. The objective is to encourage and support new, forward-looking, and entrepreneurial approaches and solutions to local issues and to share and transfer that experience. LEADER, therefore, provides a risk-free environment in which projects can progress and develop in unexpected ways or even ‘fail’; all outcomes are permitted and considered to provide opportunities to learn.

Cooperation is also a core LEADER feature. With LAGs across Europe, the wealth of LEADER local development experience, knowledge and human capital is potentially substantial, and cooperation offers a means of capitalising on this resource. LAGs can make use of, or contribute to, this network to develop the group, undertake joint projects or initiatives, to innovate, or to share or transfer knowledge and experience.

2.1.3 The anticipated added value of the approach

In evaluation, added value (or ‘additionality’) is the extent to which activity takes place at all, on a larger scale, earlier or within a specified designated area or target group because of the intervention, in this case, LEADER.²

The LEADER approach is expected to add value at a local level through the following:³

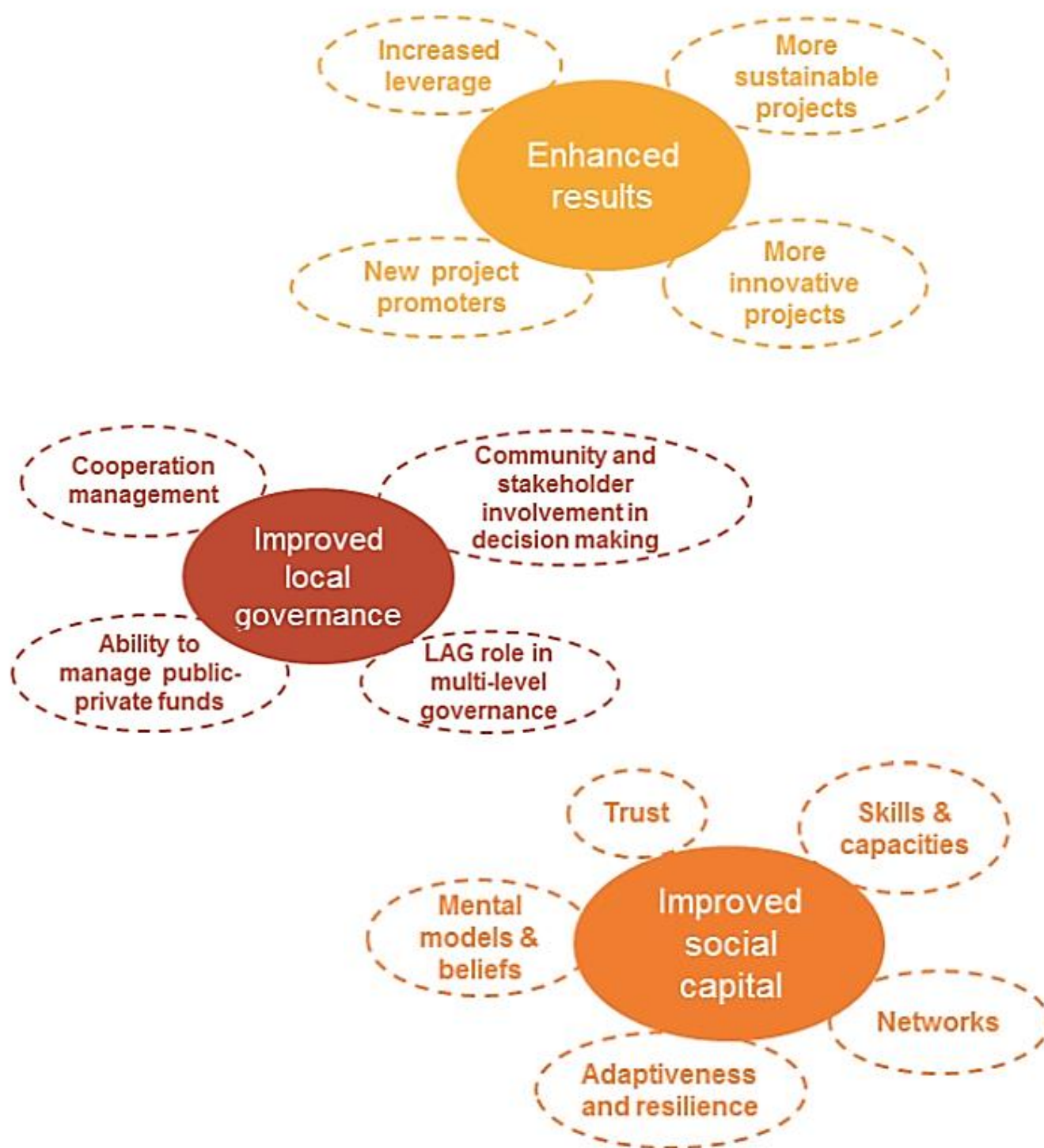
- (1) **The implementation of the LDS** (i.e., its operationalisation in the form of projects and the results and impacts they produce).
- (2) **The LAG delivery mechanism** (i.e., the set of rules, procedures, and administrative arrangements, which ensure that strategic objectives become concrete actions on the ground).
- (3) **Capacity building support/animation:** The support provided to encourage and enable the beneficiaries (i.e., activities aiming to raise the awareness, readiness, cooperation, and networking capabilities of local people to contribute to developing their area).

If correctly applied, the implementation of the LEADER method is anticipated to lead to three groups of outcomes, as illustrated by the graphics on the following page.

² Source: [Additionality Guide - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/61442/additionality_guide.pdf)

³ Source: [Guidelines: Evaluation of LEADER/CLLD \(2017\) European Network for Rural Development](https://ec.europa.eu/rural-development-policy/en/network/guidelines-evaluation-leader-clld-2017)

Figure 2.2: Anticipated outcomes of the LEADER approach



Source of graphics:
Guidelines: Evaluation of LEADER/CLLD (2017)
European Network for Rural Development

2.1.4 Funding restrictions

For most of the lifetime of the current scheme, LEADER funding could not be used to provide aid or other assistance that would constitute state aid. Further, the LEADER measure could not be used to provide capital or revenue grants or other forms of direct or indirect assistance to commercial businesses. This, however, changed in May 2021 when capital expenditure became eligible under De-Minimis State Aid to allow LAGs to respond to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in their areas, allowed LAGs to provide support to people, businesses, and organisations wanting to engage in economic activity, signposting them on to mainstream Business Wales support at the appropriate point. However, this has little if any impact in Pembrokeshire when the funding was effectively fully committed by that date.

2.2 LEADER in Pembrokeshire

2.2.1 Arwain Sir Benfro

LEADER has been active in Pembrokeshire in various forms since the 1990s. For the current RDP programme period, LEADER has been implemented within the county by the Arwain Sir Benfro LAG with PLANED undertaking the administrative and financial operations on their behalf.⁴

2.2.2 The Local Development Strategy

The LDS is described in European Commission guidelines as *'the roadmap for LEADER implementation with the LAG selecting and supporting projects, according to the contribution they make to the goals of the strategy'*.⁵

The Pembrokeshire LDS was structured in accordance with the five themes for the LEADER programme in Wales with 13 'development needs/opportunities' (also referred to as priorities within the LDS) identified under each theme, as shown in Table 2.1. Fifty 'specific objectives' are also identified which further define those development needs and opportunities.

⁴ PLANED (www.planed.org.uk) is a community-led partnership established as a social enterprise, a Development Trust, a charity, and a company limited by guarantee, with its board members being representatives from communities and from the public and private sectors. The organisation has over 30 years' experience of implementing integrated rural development (including the LEADER programme) through supporting enterprise, sustainable agriculture and tourism, heritage, and environmental activities, through community engagement and participation.

⁵ Guidance produced by the European Network for Rural Development on the development and implementation of the LDS can be found here: https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/sites/enrd/files/enrd-guidance_lsd.pdf

Table 2.1: Pembrokeshire LEADER LDS Themes and Priorities

LEADER programme Theme	Development Needs/Opportunities
Theme 1: Adding value to local identity and natural and cultural resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priority 1.1: Build on a sense of place and community identity • Priority 1.2: Increase sustainable tourism opportunities and take advantage of 'favourable' aspects of climate change • Priority 1.3: Provide access and undertake activities relating to environmental and landscape assets
Theme 2: Facilitating pre-commercial development, business partnerships and short supply chains	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priority 2.1: Provide appropriate and relevant support services to businesses • Priority 2.2: Continue to exploit strengthened collaboration between producers, processors and retailers and share practice/experiences from around the world and better co-ordinated/shortened supply chain • Priority 2.3: Develop locally relevant learning opportunities such as mentoring and coworking, create upskilling opportunities and address succession • Priority 2.4: Promote the business benefits of good environmental management
Theme 3: Exploring new ways of providing non-statutory local services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priority 3.1: Continue to support the development of community capacity and skills • Priority 3.2: Increase ownership of local delivery and develop infrastructure
Theme 4: Renewable energy at a community level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priority 4.1: Support communities to take advantage of renewable energy potential from environmental sources – e.g., solar, tidal, marine, hydro, and wind • Priority 4.2: Encourage and support communities to adopt energy-saving and conservation techniques
Theme 5: Exploitation of digital technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priority 5.1: Work towards digital inclusion for all – reducing isolation and including social, cultural, and telehealth opportunities and skills development • Priority 5.2: Ensure that best use is made of new and arriving technology

Source: Pembrokeshire Local Development Strategy

2.2.3 Funding

Each LAG is responsible for four funding pots that together will allow the LAG to manage itself, provide animation and facilitation across the LAG area and support the implementation and delivery of LEADER activities. They are:

- *Running Costs*: these cover the activities of the principal management structures of the LEADER LAG Administrative Body along with basic costs such as office accommodation, ICT connections and usage, core staff and their travel costs and any other key expenditure necessary for the LAG to operate effectively.
- *Animation*: covering the activities of the main animation, facilitation, and capacity building within the LAG area to build how ideas can be turned into deliverable projects. This will be mainly staff costs, travel costs, costs necessary to organise meetings and bring people together and, where necessary, specialist technical help or consultancy.
- *Implementation*: the main funding pot for specific and focussed initiatives to be developed and delivered that will meet the objectives of the LDS. Activities might be delivered through a range of project partners, outside organisations, groups of people within communities (either geographic or thematic) or they might be delivered by the Administrative Body on behalf of the LAG itself.
- *Cooperation*: covering projects delivered cooperatively with other LAGs within or outside Wales.

It is specified that running costs and animation costs cannot exceed 25 per cent of the total RDP funds (minus preparatory costs). Further, the LEADER implementation costs must include a minimum of 20 per cent match funding.

The final financial allocations in Pembrokeshire are noted in the table below with 80 per cent of the funding being used to fund projects via the 'implementation' and 'cooperation' budgets.

Table 2.2: LEADER programme financial allocations in Pembrokeshire (based on final expenditure figures)

Funding pot	Start date	End date	Programme funding	% of programme funding	Match funding
Animation	June 2015	Dec 2021	£560,570	11%	n/a
Running Costs	Apr 2015	Dec 2021	£425,815	9%	n/a
Implementation	Sept 2015	Dec 2021	£3,842,375	78%	£1,141,653
Cooperation	Sept 2015	Dec 2021	£100,971	2%	£16,464

Source: PLANED

2.2.4 Project staff

The team delivering LEADER in Pembrokeshire were employed on behalf of the LAG by PLANED. The team went through several changes over the lifetime of the programme as illustrated in the table below. It should be noted that several of these posts were funded by LEADER funded projects being delivered by PLANED, in addition to the posts funded by the 'running costs' and 'animation' pots.

Table 2.3: Pembrokeshire LEADER team posts over the lifetime of the programme

Ref:	Job title	FT or PT	Notes
1	Programme Manager	Full time	Filled
2	Support Assistant	Full time	Filled
3	Development Manager	Part-time	Filled
4	Support Officer	Full time	Until July 2019 then see No.5
5	Support Officer	Part-time	Filled
6	Snr Project officer	Part-time	Filled
7	Project Coordinator	Part-time	No longer required, advertised for Programme Manager July 2020
8	Co-operation & Networks Officer	Part-time	No longer required, Role changed to Snr Project Officer
9	Finance Assistant	Part-time	Filled
10	Finance & HR Officer	Full time	Filled
11	Communications Officer	Full time	Became vacant end of June 2021
12	Monitoring & Evaluation Officer	Full time	Filled
13	Office Manager	Full time	Filled
14	Rural Enterprise Link Officer	Full time	No longer required, re-recruited as Project Officer
15	Networks officer	Part-time	Vacant from March 2019, role downsized, and main duties carried out by Office Manager
16	Project Officer	Part-time	Replaced themed officers but not replaced following resignations
17	Project Officer	Part-time	Replaced themed officers but not replaced following resignations
18	Finance & Operational Manager	Full time	After resignation, the post is no longer required following the appointment of a more senior leader
19	Digital Link Officer	Full time	No longer required, re-recruited as Project Officer
20	Finance & Procurement Officer	Full time	Role redefined after resignation - see No 10.
21	Animation Officer/Coordinator	Full time	Moved to LEADER Manager role Feb 2018, and replaced in April 2019

Ref:	Job title	FT or PT	Notes
22	Animation and Impact Officer	Full time	No longer required, re-recruited as Monitoring & Evaluation Officer
23	Experience Pembrokeshire & Co-operation Officer	Full time	No longer required following the end of the fixed-term period
24	Business Skills Officer	Full time	No longer required following the end of the fixed-term period
25	Community Renewable Energy Officer	Part-time	Post no longer required after officer resignation/fixed term period
26	Projects & Partnerships Manager	Full time	Post no longer required after officer resignation/fixed term period

Source: PLANED

Twenty-six different posts have existed over the lifetime of the programme with several changes to the structure of the team being introduced as implementation progressed based on the needs at that time as well as restructuring within PLANED. Several positions were also fixed-term contracts linked to specific activities being undertaken as part of the implementation of the programme in Pembrokeshire.

Over the lifetime of the programme, there has been a move away from a thematic approach for the allocation of applications and projects between project officers to a more geographic approach. The original thematic approach was linked to the themes within the LDS with the officers responsible for all activities within that theme. This approach led to an in-balance in workload as there was greater demand for support and more applications for funding in some themes. It was decided to therefore move to a more flexible area-based approach with officers working across all themes. When discussed as part of the mid-term evaluation, this change was considered by staff to have been a positive move and is an important lesson learnt. It also demonstrates the challenges in managing a demand-led/community-led programme where the demand can be difficult to predict.

2.2.5 Identifying and assessing projects

Projects were identified through open calls on a two-stage basis. Proposers were supported by 'animateurs' with the expression of interest (EOI) adapted where appropriate. Proposers then submitted a full application that was appraised by the LAG, using a sub-group with experience in the project-related field to initially assess the application before it was presented to the full LAG who decided whether to approve it. These decisions were based on two considerations: (1) an eligibility-criteria to determine the admissibility of the proposal, and (2) a selection-criteria to assess the desirability of the proposal and a qualitative assessment of the fit with the LDS.

The graphic overleaf was produced by PLANED to illustrate the process of seeking support via the LEADER programme.

Figure 2.3: The LEADER application process in Pembrokeshire



Source: PLANED

2.2.6 Ongoing project support

LEADER Project Officers (also referred to as Thematic Officers) worked to encourage and guide prospective applicants to the funding pot available to undertake pilot projects. They also undertook eligibility checks and State Aid checks on several initial enquiries and sign-posted those ineligible for LEADER support to partner organisations, including PAVS, Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority, Pembrokeshire County Council, and other LAG Member Organisations.

On-going support and guidance were offered to the eligible applicants and this support continued through the approval process, seeking match funding where necessary, with claims and performance indicator evidence submission, publicity, and promotional activities, to successful project closure. Officers also contacted the closed projects every six months following project completion to support them with sustainability and future funding advice.

2.2.7 Project closure

As part of the closure process and before the final claim was paid, a closure form and evaluation report on the whole project was required. The evaluation report asked a range of questions such as how the project has met one or more of the five LEADER Themes and the evidence for this. How the project has met the community need stated in the application form and how it has worked with the community or other partners during the project, asking for quotes or comments to support this. It also asked if the project has any plans moving forward.

3 Review of expenditure and performance indicators

This chapter discussed the expenditure and monitoring information available for the implementation of LEADER in Pembrokeshire.

Key points

- The total investment by the scheme in the area is close to £6.5 million, when the over £1.2 million of match funding provided by projects is included.
- Ninety-eight per cent of the budget available to support LEADER projects in Pembrokeshire had been committed as early as January 2020, which was obviously well in advance of the end of the scheme.
- This is positive in respect of ensuring that the funding available is fully utilised but meant that there was little funding available to support any projects developed during the later stages of the lifetime of the scheme.
- The performance indicators collected provide little insight into what the LEADER scheme has achieved in Pembrokeshire. They do however show that the scheme has engaged with 865 stakeholders, supported 5,356 participants, and safeguarded 43 jobs.

3.1 Total expenditure

The table below sets out the final expenditure figures for LEADER in Pembrokeshire as well as the original budget figures.

Table 3.1: LEADER programme expenditure, final

Funding pot	Original RDP Budget (£)	Final RDP budget* (£)	Final Expenditure (£)	Proportion of budget utilised (%)	Match funding sourced
Animation	663,750	583,749	576,319	100%	N/A
Running Costs	442,500	442,500	442,064	100%	N/A
Implementation	3,183,855	4,146,798	4,146,798	100%	1,179,939
Cooperation	134,893	101,641	101,641	100%	16,464

Source: PLANED

*Following reprofiles of the budget agreed with the Welsh Government during the lifetime of the programme

The figures show that the budget allocation for animation and cooperation were reduced over the lifetime of the programme, with running costs also ultimately lower than the original budget. The implementation budget, however, increased.

The final expenditure figure in terms of RDP funding is just over £5.2m. The expenditure figure however increased to close to £6.5m when over £1.2 million of match funding that the scheme has sourced via the projects is considered.

The mid-term evaluation report found that, as of January 2020, 98 per cent of the budget available to support LEADER projects in Pembrokeshire had been committed which was obviously well in advance of the end of the scheme. This was clearly positive in terms of making progress and ensuring that the budget available was fully utilised and giving projects the best possible opportunity to be implanted as planned. It did however also mean that the programme has only a very small amount of funding available to support any new projects (bearing in mind that area animation activities were still ongoing at the time) that may have emerged over the remainder of the programme period.

This issue was revisited as part of the discussion at the workshop with LAG members and staff for the final evaluation where there was a divergence in views with some making positive comments about the early commitment of the funding, whilst others would have preferred some funding to have potentially been 'ringfenced' for later in the programme period to be able to respond to any ideas that may have emerged later in the programme lifetime. The recommendation in the mid-term report was that this was something that should have been considered because animation activities were ongoing and the potential need to address gaps in respect of delivering the objectives set out within the LDS document.

3.2 The number of projects and expenditure per theme

The LEADER programme in Pembrokeshire has supported a total of 71 projects, including four cooperation projects active in the area, one of which is 'led' by Arwain Sir Benfro and including one transnational project with partners in Finland.

Table 3.2: Number of approved projects and grant claim split by theme

Theme	Number of projects	Grant (claim) (£)	Mean (£)	% of total
Theme 1: Adding value to local identity and natural and cultural resources	20	447,693	22,385	22%
Theme 2: Facilitating pre-commercial development, business partnerships and short supply chains	12	456,465	38,039	22%
Theme 3: Exploring new ways of providing non-statutory local services	19	634,532	33,396	31%
Theme 4: Renewable energy at community level	7	309,758	44,251	15%
Theme 5: Exploitation of digital technology	9	159,902	17,767	8%
Cooperation	4	35,107	8,777	2%
Total	71	2,043,456	28,781	100%

Source: PLANED

Table 3.2 shows the number of projects per theme and as a percentage of the total. It also shows the budget committed per theme and as a percentage of the total.

The dominant themes in respect of the number of projects supported are Themes 1 (adding value) and 3 (non-statutory services). The largest theme in financial terms is however Theme 3. Whilst Theme 4 (renewable energy) is the theme with the smallest number of projects, on average, those projects have a higher financial value. In other words, fewer, but larger (in financial terms) projects have been supported under that theme.

The smallest theme in terms of the budget has been spent in Theme 4 (digital technology) although it is important to note that several projects allocated to other themes includes a strong emphasis on digital technology (see Chapter 5).

The restrictions because of the state aid limitations in place for this iteration of the LEADER scheme in Wales are likely to have contributed to the relatively low number of projects under Theme 2.

3.3 Performance indicators

A limited number of performance indicators are being used for the LEADER programme in Wales which are:

1. Number of feasibility studies commissioned or undertaken (output)
2. Number of pilot activities undertaken/supported (output)
3. Number of information dissemination actions/promotions undertaken (output)
4. Number of stakeholders engaged (output)
5. Number of participants supported (output)
6. Number of networks established (outcome)
7. Number of community hubs formed (outcome)
8. Number of jobs safeguarded (outcome)
9. Number of jobs created (outcome) (not used in Pembrokeshire).

Definition for these indicators can be found in Appendix 1.

This limited number of indicators is in line with the Welsh Government's change of approach for the current LEADER programme in response to criticisms of the previous programme which included a far longer list of performance indicators, leading to a very complex monitoring process. The much more limited number of indicators does however mean that the data available to judge the success of the programme, based on these performance indicators alone, is limited. The potential for additional 'local' level performance indicators was considered as part of the mid-term evaluation and can be found in Appendix 2 of this report.

Table 3.3 shows the achievement of the LEADER programme in Pembrokeshire against the performance indicators. It shows that the programme has overachieved against all targets, dramatically in most instances.

Table 3.3: Performance indicators for the LEADER programme in Pembrokeshire; final

Indicator	Target	Achieved	% target achieved
Number of feasibility studies	10	12	120%
Number of pilot activities undertaken/supported	30	86	287%
Number of information dissemination actions/promotional and/or marketing activities	20	740	3700%
Number of stakeholders engaged	100	865	865%
Number of participants supported	400	5,356	1339%
Number of networks established	5	30	600%
Number of community hubs	2	17	850%
Number of jobs safeguarded through supported projects	3	43	1441%

Source: PLANED

The usefulness of targets for a programme such as LEADER is, we would argue, questionable. The emphasis is on working with the community to develop and then support new and innovative projects. Further, 'failure' is accepted as being part of the programme because of that emphasis on piloting new and innovative approaches to rural development. The appropriateness of setting targets in such a context is questionable.

Performance indicators are however useful as an indicator of what a programme has achieved. Outputs are indicators of the activities undertaken and we see that Arwain Sir Benfro has supported 12 feasibility studies and supported 86 pilot activities. Over 700 information dissemination actions have been undertaken which suggests that extensive activities have been undertaken in that regard as part of the delivery of the programme. This has led to over 800 stakeholders being engaged and more than 5,000 participants being supported although there is no data on who those participants are, which would have added to the value of the data.

The data on outcomes is sparse, limited to the number of networks and hubs established, and the number of jobs safeguarded. This data, as noted earlier, provides little insight into what the LEADER programme has achieved in Pembrokeshire although the challenges of collecting a standard set of outcome indicators for a programme that supports such a wide range of activities/projects must be acknowledged. We would not therefore be critical of the programme in this regard with information on outcomes having to be provided by the projects, as discussed later in this report.

Several important indicators are, however, we would argue, missing. These are important in terms of understanding how the programme in Pembrokeshire has been delivered and what has been achieved. They are:

- Number of pilot projects supported: 71
- Investment in rural development projects: £4.1 million
- Match funding levered into the area: £1.2 million
- Number of LAG meetings: 26
- Number of LAG members attending more than 50 per cent of meetings: 7
- Follow-up funding secured by supported projects: £2.5 million (at least).

A number of these indicators are discussed in the chapters that follow.

4 Review of the implementation of the LEADER approach in Pembrokeshire

This chapter discusses the implementation of the LEADER approach in Pembrokeshire and is mainly taken from the mid-term report of the evaluation although some issues were revisited as part of the discussions during the workshop with LAG members and staff undertaken as part of the research for this end-line report.

Key points

- Designing an LDS that is very broad, as was the case in Pembrokeshire, is logical in respect of not restricting the type of projects that may emerge. However, the approach provides little 'strategy' for the utilisation of the funding available.
- There were 26 LAG meetings over the lifetime of the scheme with 11 members attending each meeting on average. Seven members have attended 16 or more of the meetings suggesting that there has been good continuity over the period.
- Being a member of the LAG has generated a range of benefits for the individuals concerned.
- Views on the performance of the LAG were found to be overwhelmingly positive. Concerns that the LAG has been operating too much as a 'grants assessment panel' are however noteworthy.
- Views on PLANED's performance as the administrative body were positive.
- Feedback from applicants on the support they received from the Arwain Sir Benfro team was positive.
- Whilst LAG members identified the ability of the scheme to support organisations with little previous experience of delivering rural development projects, most organisations delivering the projects reported that they had substantial previous experience.
- The vast majority of those involved in delivering projects said that they're involvement with Arwain Sir Benfro had a positive influence on whether they would become involved in rural development projects in Pembrokeshire in the future.
- There is an argument that there was the potential for the Arwain Sir Benfro team in the earlier years of the programme to have been more pro-active in their approach than they were, working with groups or communities that may be under-represented within the projects supported to develop ideas and projects. The fact that the funding available was committed early and the very high levels of demand for support do however need to be considered.
- Whilst there has clearly been an emphasis on supporting pilot and innovative projects, there is an argument that it may have been appropriate to have a greater focus on activity which are more clearly innovative as part of the scheme in Pembrokeshire.
- The need to ensure that the findings of projects and lessons learnt are effectively shared also needs to be emphasised as it is a key part of the innovative process.
- Linked to the above, the potential for further networking and cooperation activities needs to be considered, both of which are key features of the LEADER approach.

4.1 The Local Development Strategy

The mid-term evaluation report included a review of the LDS for Pembrokeshire as developed by the LAG. It found that the strategy it presented was very broad, identifying a wide range of issues that LEADER funding would be used to try and address. This is not uncommon within the LEADER programme in Wales. A range of factors need to be considered when considering this including that the original LDS was prepared at a time when the detail of the programme had not yet been finalised. The fact that LEADER is designed to be a 'bottom up' support mechanism, supporting ideas that come from within the community, also needs to be acknowledged. In that context, designing a broad LDS which does not restrict the type and range of projects that can be supported is a logical approach. It is not however necessarily 'strategic'.

The broadness of the LDS means that its usefulness as a guide or action-plan for how LEADER funds in Pembrokeshire should be utilised, is limited - most ideas and project proposals will fit within the LDS given that it is so broad. Whether or not this is a good thing is debatable. The key is that the LAG needs to be clear about how they want the LEADER funds available to them to be utilised.

In the mid-term report we argued that there was a clear rationale for a narrower, more focused approach from the mid-way point in a LEADER programme, when gaps in activities undertaken to date and clearer priorities emerge. The situation in Pembrokeshire was however different because 98 per cent of the funding available had already been committed which obviously restricted the options of the LAG going forward.

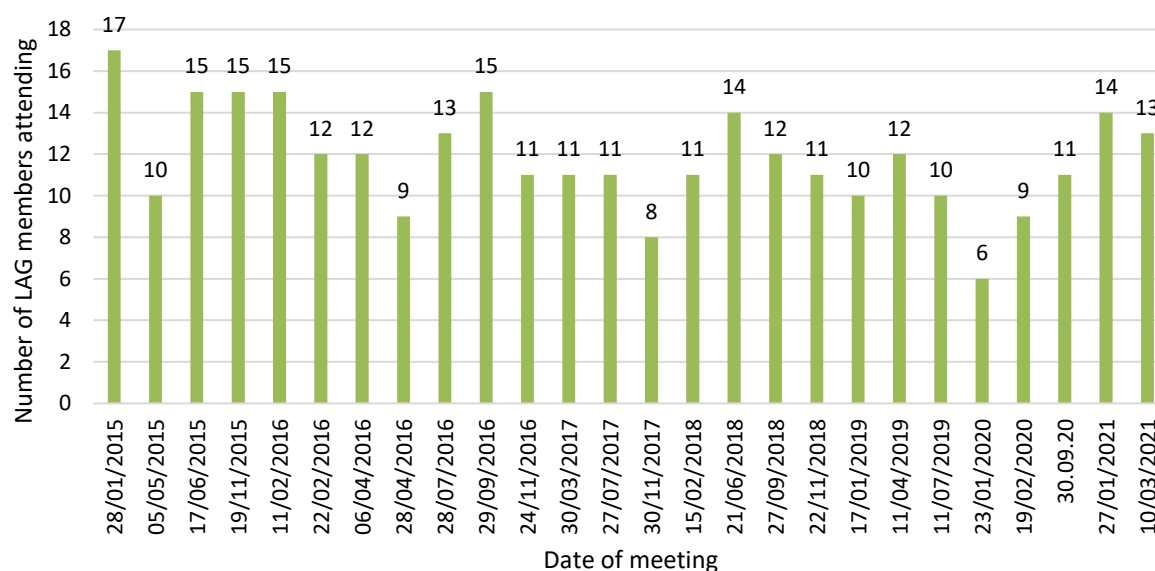
The approach taken was revisited during the discussion with LAG members and staff as part of the workshop undertaken as part of the final phase of the evaluation. The consensus during that discussion was that the broad approach was the correct **on** with the LDS being used as a guide for communities on how the funding would be utilised as opposed to a prescriptive set of activities that the LAG wished to see happen. Such an approach, it was argued would go against the community led priorities of the LEADER approach.

The key to the 'broad versus focused' LDS debate is that the LAG needs to be clear about what their objective for LEADER in Pembrokeshire is. If the objective to fund good or innovative ideas, whatever they may be, a broad approach is appropriate. If, however the objective is to addressing specific priorities, challenges, or opportunities within the county, a narrower, more targeted, approach is necessary.

4.2 The Local Action Group

4.2.1 Number of meetings and attendance

Figure 4.1: LAG meetings and attendance (January 2015 to March 2021)



Source: analysis of data provided by PLANED

The graph above shows the number of LAG members attending meetings between January 2015 and March 2021 which there were 26. It should be noted that, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, meetings were held via online video from March 2020.

The average attendance at meetings has been 11. Fifty-one individuals attended at least one meeting during the period with the average number of meetings attended by a member being 6.2 out of 26, or around one in four meetings. That figure may lead to concerns about continuity at LAG meetings over the period. Seven members have however attended 16 or more of the meetings suggesting that there has been good continuity over the period.

LAGs are designed to include representation from the public, private and third sector. If we look at the average attendance at meetings by representatives of those sectors, we find that the average number attending meetings has been 3.5 from the public sector, 4.3 from the private sector and 4.1 from the third sector. On average, therefore, no one of the three sectors has been overrepresented at meetings which is positive.

4.2.2 Views on the performance of the LAG

The mid-term evaluation focus that the views of those interviewed on the performance of the LAG were overwhelmingly positive with both staff and LAG members clearly aware and comfortable with their responsibilities as members and the specifics of the LEADER approach. Views on the LAG meetings were also positive with no significant issues being identified although the length of meetings (especially meeting early in the lifetime of the programme) was frequently noted as being long, although members did not express any significant concerns of this matter. Importantly, the process of assessing applications for support was considered to be robust and effective. The quality of the discussion was also considered to be high.

A concern by some that the LAG had been operating too much as a 'grants assessment panel' with a focus largely on assessing applications for support, was however noted at the mid-term evaluation stage. This view was also repeated during discussions at the workshop with LAG members and staff for the end-term phase of the evaluation. The risk in such a scenario is that the other elements of the LEADER approach (which are important in terms of the added value of the approach) are not given adequate attention at a LAG level. This is a matter that we will review further as this chapter progresses and other elements of the LEADER approach are discussed.

4.2.3 Perceived benefits of being a LAG member

A range of things were identified when, as part of the mid-term evaluation, LAG members were asked to describe how, if at all, they benefited from being a member of the LAG. The most prominent of these was the networking that takes place in the margins of LAG meetings. Other benefits were however also identified including:

- Becoming aware of projects and activities – outside the individuals' usual area of work (*'getting out of the bubble I work in'*)
- Raising awareness about the organisation they represent
- Becoming more strategic in their thinking (due to awareness of other activities).

Such benefits are an important outcome of the LEADER approach and need to be considered alongside any discussion about outcomes achieved by projects funded by the programme.

4.3 The role of PLANED as the administrative body

The mid-term evaluation found that LAG members were overwhelmingly positive when asked to comment on the role undertaken by PLANED in their capacity as the administrative lead body, highlighting the benefit derived from the wealth of experience that PLANED have in respect of delivering both the LEADER approach and engaging with communities in Pembrokeshire. There was also reference during discussions to the benefit of being able to build on the contacts and networks that PLANED had in place, because of their experience. The fact that the LEADER approach was embedded into how the organisation works was also noted.

Changes in personnel within PLANED over the lifetime of the programme (as noted in Chapter 2) were highlighted by several LAG members with some concerns being expressed about its *potential* impact on delivery although no actual negative impact was perceived. Indeed, it was recognised that the organisation seemed to be ‘coping well’ with the necessary changes that had taken place which is clearly positive and reflects upon the organisation’s increasing knowledge from new team members and the wider professional and external experience now being brought within PLANED as a delivery organisation.

4.4 Animation, engaging with the local community and providing support

A key objective of the animation element of LEADER is to engage with the local community. One of the questions that applicants were asked as part of the survey for the mid-term report was how they had found out about the support that was potentially available to them from Arwain Sir Benfro. The majority reported that it was because they had previously worked with PLANED (32 out of 54 respondents). On the one hand, this demonstrates the value of the contact within PLANED in respects of rolling out a programme of support in Pembrokeshire. However, it potentially also raises some concerns about the ability of the LEADER programme to engage with organisations outside of that network although it is important to note that 22 out of 54 respondents (or 41 per cent) had had found out about the programme from other sources.

Most respondents to the mid-term evaluation survey (42 out of 54) said that they received support from the PLANED team during the development of their idea or project, suggesting a high demand for support. The fact that a high proportion of respondents had an existing working relationship with PLANED, as noted above, does however need to be considered.

Feedback on the usefulness of the support provided was very positive with the knowledge and experience of the team within PLANED being highlighted. On a scale of zero (useless) to four (very useful), 28 out of 41 respondents (68 per cent) of respondents gave a top score of four. The average (mean) score was a very positive 3.6 out of four.

With a view to exploring the outcomes of the support being provided, the mid-term evaluation survey also asked respondents to assess how likely it was that their application for funds from LEADER would have been submitted *without* the support they received. Sixty-four per cent (27/42) said that it was ‘certain’ or ‘likely’ that they would have submitted their application without receiving support suggesting that, in most cases, support was not essential. However, nearly one in four (24 per cent) said that it was ‘unlikely’ or ‘certain’ that they would not have submitted their application without the support. This suggests that, in many cases, support from PLANED is supporting organisations to get involved in rural development in ways which they otherwise would not have done. This is important in respects of fostering local economic development, a key objective of LEADER.

Feedback about the application process and its different elements was, in most cases, again positive. Most respondents (42 out of 54) agreed that the guidance provided was easy to understand. The majority (43 out of 54) also agreed that it provided all the information needed. The scores given to rate the application process, form, and the efficiency with which the application was dealt with were also, in most cases positive. There was also very positive feedback about the support provided once a project was up and running.

There was some discussion about the animation process as part of the workshop with LAG members and staff for the end-term evaluation. Several participants in the project highlighted the fact that Arwain Sir Benfro had been able to engage groups and organisations in rural development activities for the first time as a key outcome of the programme. The fact that the mid-term evaluation survey highlights that a relatively high proportion of those involved in the delivery of projects had an existing relationship with PLANED may challenge this to some extent although, as noted above, a proportion of respondents have become aware of the support available in other ways.

The survey of projects for the mid-term evaluation also explored how involved those delivering projects had been in rural development before their engagement with Arwain Sir Benfro. Half (27/54) of those interviewed reported that they had previously been involved 'a lot' in other projects delivered in rural Pembrokeshire, with a further 37 per cent (20/54) saying that they had 'some' involvement previously; only 13 per cent (7/54) said that they had no previous involvement. This, again possibly contradicting the views expressed by LAG members, suggests that the programme has had limited success in respect of engaging groups in rural development in Pembrokeshire for the first time. Rather it supports concerns expressed by some LAG members that much of the support has been provided to organisations with extensive previous experience of delivering rural development projects in the area.

Whether or not this is a good thing is again a matter of debate with some arguing that the utilisation of funding by experienced organisations drives up the standard of projects being delivered (as well as minimising the risk of poor delivery). Others highlighted the benefit of drawing in 'new blood' into rural development in Pembrokeshire. Both points of view are valid.

Unsurprisingly given the previous experience of most respondents, 95 per cent (41/54) said that they were 'likely' or 'very likely' to continue to be involved in some capacity with active projects in rural Pembrokeshire in the future (76 per cent saying that it was 'very likely'). There was however a mixed response to this question from the small group of respondents who had no previous involvement in rural development projects with two of the seven saying that it was 'very likely', three saying it was 'likely' and two saying it was 'unlikely'. This suggests that this small group of first timers may need some persuasion to continue to be involved.

Despite the previous experience of most, 95 per cent (51/54) of respondents said that their involvement with Arwain Sir Benfro had a positive influence on whether they would become involved in rural development projects in Pembrokeshire in the future. Where comments were negative (small minority) it was due to the high level of commitment that they had to give the current project (i.e., they were not sure they wanted to do that again).

The vast majority (93 per cent, 50/54) said that their involvement with Arwain Sir Benfro meant that they had met and/or were working with different people, for the first time (63 per cent saying, 'a lot', 30 per cent saying 'a few'). This is a positive outcome and suggests that, even though most applicants had previous experience of undertaking projects in rural Pembrokeshire, they were still benefiting from their involvement with Arwain Sir Benfro.

Proactive vs reactive

There were some concerns expressed during the workshop with LAG members and staff that Arwain Sir Benfro had operated too much as a 'grant scheme' reacting to applications for support submitted and that more could potentially have been done to work proactively with communities to generate and then support project ideas (i.e., more animation activities). It seems clear that work has been undertaken to engage with communities and seek to generate interest in the programme and project ideas.

Work undertaken with local young farmers was highlighted during the workshop, although that did not lead to a project being developed or supported. It is also however clear that demand for financial support has been very high over the lifetime of the programme, which earlier members of the PLANED team involved in supporting project applications found challenging in terms of meeting that demand. Undertaking pro-active activities in such a scenario is inevitably challenging. The differing views on whether the Arwain Sir Benfro programme found the correct balance between pro-active and reactive activities is however a point to note.

4.5 Innovation

The evaluation found that LAG members and staff were clearly aware of the emphasis on innovation within the LEADER programme and described how the level of innovation within applications is always discussed during LAG meetings. LAG members and staff were also found to be generally satisfied with the level of innovation within the projects.

The generally accepted definition of 'innovation' within LEADER in Wales is to pilot or test an activity, service, or way of working that had not been seen or tried in the area/sector previously. Whilst this definition is not incorrect, there is an argument that it is very broad, especially given that the focus on innovation within the programme is based on the premise that doing "more of the same" isn't enough and that new solutions to existing problems should be sought. It is however also important to note how the EC define innovation within the Guidance on CLLD; their definition is deliberately broad and acknowledged that not all activity can be 'innovative'.

“In this context, the Commission has left the definition of innovation in CLLD deliberately open, rather than trying to define it “up front”, which, by definition, limits the scope for local creativity. Innovation can involve new services, new products, and new ways of doing things in the local context (Article 32(2)(d)). Of course, not everything in the strategy has to be innovative, as partnerships will often have to build trust by showing that they can also fulfil certain short term basic needs.”⁶

The difference between disruptive and incremental innovation is also worth noting. incremental innovation is when a new product, service or process is introduced to a market or area, designed to make a significant impact by completely replacing existing technologies and methods. By contrast, *incremental innovation* is usually focused on improving an existing product or service’s efficiency, productivity and/or competitive differentiation. It is the latter that is seen in LEADER often and the argument of some LAG members is that a more disruptive approach may be needed.

The need to complete what could be described as the innovation cycle or process also needs to be emphasised. There are many versions of this cycle or process all of which generally conclude with a review of the innovation that has been introduced after which it is either ‘mainstreamed’, modified for a further pilot or, discarded as not something worth introducing more widely. This final ‘review’ process is an essential component.

Project closure forms and case study templates provided the mechanism for this review to take place and there has been some review of lessons learnt within the forms that have been completed. That review is however limited and could be further enhanced; in many instances, only very basic information is provided.

It was also apparent during the workshop with LAG members for the final evaluation report that members felt that they had only limited information about what the projects that had been supported had achieved. Whilst staff did point to reports that had been provided to the LAG members about project achievements, it was clear that members felt ill informed about the outcomes of projects pointing to the fact that, in many instances, the information about projects on the Arwain Sir Benfro website was based on the applications for support that has been submitted, rather than what the projects had achieved.

⁶ [Guidance on Community-Led Local Development for Local Actors \(2014\)](#). European Structural and Investment Funds Guidance for Member States and Programme Authorities Guidance for Beneficiaries. Pg. 28

4.6 Networking and cooperation

As noted earlier in this chapter, LAG members have highlighted at both the mid and end-term evaluation rounds that the group itself provided a networking opportunity for members and indeed identified networking as one of the benefits of membership of the group. LAG members have also attended a hand-full of networking events related to LEADER but highlighted time as a major restriction of their ability to participate in such activity, even when they were particularly keen to do so. The PLANED team had also participated in such events including international events which were considered to have been of some benefit. The challenges of building a cooperative project following such activities were however noted, with time, again, being identified as the main constraint.

Some networking has taken place at a 'project level' with completed projects having been brought together to present and discuss their projects and further such meetings are planned. The value of such networking at a project level will increase as projects move further into their delivery stages and come to an end.

Looking outside Pembrokeshire, interviewees reported that some networking was taking place at a LAG chair and officer level with other LAGs within the region with those meetings being described as valuable, if a little too infrequent.

It seems clear however from interviews that LAG members have limited awareness of activities and projects being undertaken by LAGs in other parts in Wales. This is despite the existence of the Wales Rural Network (WRN) which shares information about projects being supported by LAGs on its website⁷. This is of some concern as an awareness of what projects and ideas are being piloted in other areas could be of substantial benefit; for example, it may stimulate the development of ideas for new projects in Pembrokeshire. It also means that an opportunity to learn from the experience in other areas is being lost.

Staff members however highlighted the fact that constraints/pressure on their time, limited the amount of attention they could pay to developing cooperative projects (which tend to be resource intensive) highlighting that, when work must be prioritised, and development and delivery of 'local' projects had been prioritised above cooperative projects.

⁷ The Wales Rural Network is a forum to promote the exchange of expertise in rural development delivered by the Welsh Government funded by the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020. See: <https://businesswales.gov.wales/walesruralnetwork/local-action-groups-and-projects>

5 Review of the projects funded

The focus of this chapter is on the range of projects that have been supported by Arwain Sir Benfro. All the projects that have been funded are included in this chapter, split by programme theme. This adds to the length of this chapter and the report. However, the only way to truly appreciate the range of projects that have been supported by the programme is to read the list of projects in full. We therefore make no apologies of including all projects in this chapter.

Key points

- A very wide range of projects have been supported.
- Feasibility studies have been funded under several of the themes and are an important element of the scheme.
- Tourism, heritage, and cultural projects feature throughout.
- Several projects have allowed staff to be employed to support the development and delivery of activities.
- Several projects involve encouraging and supporting the development of relationships and networking between stakeholders and within communities.
- There is an emphasis on making the best possible use of the resources and particular characteristics of Pembrokeshire, particularly in respect of the renewable energy theme.
- Projects have delivered a range of services including food poverty, child poverty, health & wellbeing, eco-therapy, climate change and tackling isolation and loneliness.
- The range of projects supported have not achieved the aims and objectives set out under any of the themes of the LDS and there is no clear strategy in terms of the projects supported.
- However, this is as intended with the emphasis on supporting and piloting a wide range of projects within the themes set out within the LDS as opposed to achieving any particular strategic objective.

5.1 Theme 1: adding value to local identity and natural and cultural resources

Theme 1 is described within the LDS as aiming to address the fact that the wealth of built, natural and cultural heritage of Pembrokeshire are still under-utilised as local assets that can provide social, environmental, and economic benefit to local communities. Three priorities were identified within the theme:

- Build on a sense of place and community identity
- Increase sustainable tourism opportunities and take advantage of 'favourable' aspects of climate change
- Provide access and undertake activities relating to environmental and landscape assets.

Twenty projects were funded under Theme 1, representing an investment of £452,439 of the funding available, 22 per cent of the total investment by the LAG. The projects are listed in the table below according to the value of the grant funding provided by Arwain Sir Benfro.

The list includes several feasibility studies for projects exploring the potential to introduce new and innovative tourism and heritage attractions in the area. The cross-cutting themes of climate change and the Welsh language are also directly addressed by projects funded under this theme.

Project name	Funding	Summary
1. Pembrokeshire Remakery	£71,299.28	A project to support the move towards legislation of zero waste by 2050 in the UK via a community approach where skills and knowledge are developed to make Pembrokeshire a better place to live in now and for future generations.
2. PLANED Innovative Heritage	£53,945.00	Support, mentoring and training for heritage groups to learn new skills and engage a wider range of people to ensure a sustainable future. Harnessing digital technology to interpret collections and trialling new techniques to create innovative, high quality tourism products.
3. Newport Kiln	£52,500.00	Funding for a project manager and education & community engagement programme for a new tourist attraction to enhance the cultural heritage tourist experience in Newport and the surrounding local area.
4. Y Digwyddiad (The Event)	£44,033.73	A project to explore the position of Welsh language music and wider culture amongst young people in Pembrokeshire to inform the development of future events.
5. Podcasts & Postcards	£29,688.00	A project seeking to connect young people with their community and heritage by providing training in digital technologies, photography, and film. The aim was to promote heritage and give young people the skills and professional portfolios to establish new enterprise and stimulate tourism.
6. Flagship Heritage Centre Feasibility Study	£29,399.65	A feasibility study to test the achievability of the vision of transforming Haverfordwest Castle into a top-quality heritage attraction that attracts both local people and visitors to the county town.
7. North Pembrokeshire Boutique Tours	£16,619.13	A study examining the feasibility for a number of 'boutique tours' in north Pembrokeshire designed to expand a range of visitor experiences to include many assets of the rural communities in this area.
8. Tourism & Hospitality Vocational Training Academy of Wales Feasibility Study	£16,196.28	Funding for a feasibility study, business plan & operational plan to outline a network of industry-led training academies for, and run by, the tourism industry.
9. Adders Are Amazing!	£14,999.58	Funding to deliver the 'community engagement' aspect of a programme to develop a National Adder Conservation Strategy to prevent this native snake from slipping into extinction.

Project name	Funding	Summary
10. Poppit Path	£14,999.00	The construction of a multi-use path from St Dogmaels to Poppit Sands to promote the use of walking, bicycles, wheelchairs, and pushchairs along the route.
11. Drawn Together	£14,999.00	A participatory arts project exploring how the shared creative activity of drawing can celebrate identities and contribute towards community cohesion.
12. Henry VII Centre Feasibility Study	£14,850.00	A feasibility study for the development of a proposed Henry VII visitor centre.
13. Saundersfoot Land Train	£12,972.35	Support for a land train service benefitting local communities and visitors, highlighting tourism, heritage, and culture, which will increase and promote tourism throughout the local areas, linking communities and amenities.
14. Inspirational Dragons	£11,396.48	A project to: (1) carry out a scoping study into the building of a fountain; (2) explore the design and technology involved in its working and construction; (3) build a working maquette of the dragon fountain; and (4) in the process, involve the community and schools in the design, working with them to develop resources.
15. Pembroke Dock Tourism Feasibility Study	£11,319.35	A feasibility study of the potential for tourism in Pembroke Dock and to investigate and assess tourism initiatives and assets in the area.
16. Newport Kiln Interpretation	£10,600.00	A project to create a new tourist attraction to enhance the cultural heritage tourist experience in Newport.
17. Understanding Commoning	£10,150.00	A project to establish the situation in respect of commons within Pembrokeshire, collect baseline data, examine the barriers to the exercise of rights on commons and begin to develop solutions that would represent a second phase of activity.
18. Marine Litter Clean Seas	£8,905.42	A project to raise awareness and change behaviours to reduce marine litter by creating an iconic steel sculpture of a sea bass filled with plastic litter on the Amroth sea front.
19. A Museum for the Community	£7,980.00	A feasibility study for a building seeking to identify potential for innovative design and, through market research, identify innovative ways to present special and vibrant content.
20. Visitor Giving Feasibility Study	£5,586.61	A feasibility study to for a visitor giving scheme in Pembrokeshire.

5.2 Theme 2: facilitating pre-commercial development, business partnerships and short supply chains

The LDS describes the focus of Theme 2 as being on the need to explore economic opportunity, that are sector specific, and which are unique to Pembrokeshire such as a high-quality tourism offer and adding value to the coastal and marine sectors.

The priorities identified by the LDS were to:

- Provide appropriate and relevant support services to businesses.
- Continue to exploit strengthened collaboration between producers, processors and retailers and share practice/experiences from around the world and better co-ordinated /shortened supply chain.
- Develop locally relevant learning opportunities such as mentoring and co-working, create upskilling opportunities and address succession.
- Promote the business benefits of good environmental management.

Twelve projects were funded under Theme 2, representing an investment of £459,367 of the funding available, 23 per cent of the total investment by the LAG. Again, the projects are listed in the table below according to the value of the grant funding they received.

As in Theme 1, several feasibility studies have been funded. The list also includes several projects that funded the employment of staff for projects alongside the utilisation of new ICT to pilot new approaches for the delivery of key services. Several the projects also involve encouraging and supporting the development of relationships and networking between stakeholders and within communities.

Project name	Funding	Summary
1. PAVS Capacity to Care	£155,218.00	A project using the Community Catalysts methodology to support the development of a network of micro-providers and social enterprises providing a range of flexible, person-centred, and high-quality local care, support and well-being services that give people real choice and control over their care.
2. Rural Community Land Trust – Pembrokeshire Pilot	£76,433.56	A two-year pilot to develop a Community Land Trust for Pembrokeshire.
3. Slipper Limpet Feasibility Study	£75,619.97	A research study into the extraction of hemocyanin from the Slipper Limpet and comparing it against existing hemocyanin's used in pharma products. Also, the development of a plan for Slipper Limpet extraction and handling for fishermen who catch the limpet as a by-catch.
4. PLANED Community Asset Fund	£28,758.00	The development of an on-line cloud-based platform to allow Pembrokeshire communities to easily raise funds for maintaining local assets and facilities such as playing fields, play equipment, village halls, notice boards and so on.
5. Tir Coed - LEAF pilot project	£26,828.06	A pilot to help Tir Coed train staff build relationships with stakeholders in Pembrokeshire - LEAF is a project to create opportunities for disadvantaged people to access well-being woodland activities, woodland skills training courses, weeklong intensive training in sector specific activities, mentoring, work placements and support for fledgling enterprises.
6. Destination Pembrokeshire	£19,285.00	Funding to develop the Pembrokeshire Destination Management Plan from an early draft stage to a fully worked up and professionally published strategy that has the buy in of the whole sector.
7. FRAME - The Pembrokeshire Pod	£14,999.00	Funding to explore the potential and usage of a building to benefit the local community - achieved through the contribution of costs towards a part time Project Co-ordinator for 12 months and contribution towards the costs of architects.
8. Transforming Spaces Toolkit (Pembrokeshire County Council)	£14,991.45	A project to design and construct a web-based community development toolkit to encourage and enable community members to be more involved with local regeneration, social activities, and environmental projects.

Project name	Funding	Summary
9. Haverhub	£14,980.00	Support to pilot a community regeneration hub in the Old Post Office, Haverfordwest including funding professional help to undergo all site surveys, drawings and specifications to project manage the renovations. To enhance the business plan, and other planning tools, and legal/organisational model.
10. Green Seas Seaweed	£14,315.44	Research into the markets and potential economic viability, value adding raw product (for food service industry) and onward seaweed growth.
11. Milford Haven Port Authority Feasibility Study	£10,700.00	A feasibility study for the redevelopment of a vacant and redundant site in a key town centre location, known as the former Victoria Filling Station and Grade II listed Quay Stores on Victoria Road.
12. Tir Coed - Cilrhedyn Sawmills Feasibility Study	£7,238.53	A feasibility study exploring the utilisation of the facilities at the Cilrhedyn Woodland Centre to facilitate, support and develop people to better use the natural resources of the region.

5.3 Theme 3: exploring new ways of providing non-statutory local services

The LDS describes access to services as continuing to be a priority highlighting that there are also likely to be new challenges because of a reduction of services currently provided by the public sector, creating further pressure on rural communities.

The priorities identified in the LDS are to:

- Continue to support the development of community capacity and skills
- Increase ownership of local delivery and develop infrastructure.

Nineteen projects were funded under Theme 3, with £643,769 of RDP funding invested – 32 per cent of the total - making Theme 3 the largest in financial terms. Again, the projects are listed in the table below according to the value of the grant funding they received.

A wide range of activity has been supported again including a number of feasibility studies. The actual delivery of services has however also been supported in a range of areas including food, child poverty, health & wellbeing, eco-therapy, climate change and tackling isolation and loneliness.

Project name	Funding	Summary
1. PAVS: Connected Communities	£163,344.18	Funding for a third sector-led community and citizen-centred approach to improving health and well-being in Pembrokeshire.
2. PLANED: Community Wellbeing and Resilience Project	£96,375.06	Funding to recruit two Project Officers to explore how town and community councils can build community resilience through engaging their communities in developing local well-being assessments, plans and project activities.
3. Pembrokeshire County Council Eco Champions	£76,988.40	Funding to appointing an Eco Champion officer to work with Town and Community Councils to identify Eco Champions in their area.
4. PLANED Co-op Share Offer	£59,360.00	A pilot project developing a Community Shares Support Service for Pembrokeshire.
5. JIG-SO	£36,365.18	Outreach services to tackle child poverty and in-work food poverty. The project introduced a rural support kitchen service to four test areas in north Pembrokeshire.
6. Narberth Community Fridge	£34,752.15	A project to establish Wales' first permanent Community Fridge and Larder. Funding was used to employ a part time Project Coordinator to steer the project for two years.
7. Reconnect in Nature	£32,661.00	The project to build capacity for the delivery of an innovative "nature connections and wellbeing" course through a 'train the trainer' course for volunteers.
8. PIP Solva Care	£27,457.93	The PIP (Prevention, Integration, Partnership) project was to develop and implement a total model of care.
9. Pembrokeshire Community Foundation Study	£16,600.00	A scoping study on different opportunities and models for establishing a special-purpose vehicle for local giving and social investment in Pembrokeshire.
10. Clynyfw	£14,999.00	A feasibility study of the potential to develop farm and woodland based eco-therapy schemes/services as well as making a short and accessible film, which can be used as a way of introducing the concept of natural health centres.
11. Trans Bro Gwaun: Reducing Food Waste	£14,915.40	Funding to expand various elements of this existing surplus food project.

Project name	Funding	Summary
12. Bloomfield Older Person's	£14,900.00	Funding to employ a Project Developer to investigate the need for facilities for older people in the local community and to work with the onsite Lee Davies Day Care Centre to possibly extend provision. The viability of operating the facility should the local authority withdraw funding in future budget cut was also reviewed.
13. Compassionate Communities	£14,750.67	The project has explored a range of opportunities enabling communities to learn about and to support each other around End-of-Life Care issues and lived experiences. The project was able to address the emotional and social needs by facilitating workshops, talks, presentations, community cafes, film clubs, etc. that enabled people to gather in a safe space to learn about planning for their future care together in a supportive environment.
14. Hiraeth Hope Refugees	£14,645.29	A project to research, prepare and establish a community sponsored settlement in Pembrokeshire, with outreach work to other parts of West Wales.
15. Woolly Workshop	£13,907.36	Workshops on yarn bombing which consist of knitting, crocheting and needlepoint
16. Mobile Wellbeing College	£7,631.24	The project delivered mobile wellbeing services across four areas of Pembrokeshire to improve awareness and access to the Adlerian counselling services. The project also piloted wellbeing surgeries comprising of no-cost, short pre-booked appointments and/or drop-ins across the county.
17. VC Gallery	£6,338.73	A project aiming to combat loneliness and social isolation, helping service veterans and those in the wider community by getting them engaged in a variety of art projects.
18. Co-housing Hafan Las – Co-housing Community Pilot	£5,463.49	Co-housing is a form of group living, which clusters small, individual homes around a 'common house' - which is the hub of the community with its own kitchen/dining/activity room, shared laundry and vehicles, guest rooms and craft rooms/workshops. The overall site and shared facilities are owned/managed by the residents. This pilot did not receive the interest that was expected and did not fully achieve what was intended.
19. PACTO Car Chums	£4,877.00	A feasibility study to assess the potential for encouraging and facilitating lift-sharing.
20. Dinas Cross Wellbeing	£4,036.99	A pilot project in a small community, using innovative approaches to explore the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (2017) and the Social Services and Wellbeing Act (2014). The Well-being of Future Generations Act requires a different approach to working.

5.4 Theme 4: renewable energy at community level

This theme sought to build on what the LDS identified as a working knowledge of community energy schemes/research within Pembrokeshire which needed to be shared. The potential to cooperate with existing examples of good practice, both within the UK and Europe was identified with a view to supporting opportunities to co-operate with communities who have overcome challenges to deliver community owned renewable technologies and wider energy schemes.

The priorities identified for this theme were to:

- Support communities to take advantage of renewable energy potential from environmental sources – e.g., solar, tidal, marine, hydro, and wind.
- Encourage and support communities to adopt energy saving and conservation techniques.

Seven projects were funded under this theme representing an investment of £309,424 of RDP funding – 15 per cent of the total. As previously, the projects are listed in the table below according to the value of the grant funding they received.

There is a clear emphasis on piloting projects within this theme with several projects focused on utilising the characteristics of Pembrokeshire as a means of generating energy. There are also projects that seek to support the transfer of knowledge and skills to local groups fitting with the emphasis within LEADER on capacity building.

Project name	Funding	Summary
1. Community Energy Pembrokeshire - Local Energy Action Force project	£115,534.03	A pilot engaging five local communities aiming to generate and trade sustainable energy. It involved capacity building/dissemination sessions, plus fact-finding trips to other community projects.
2. Transition Bro Gwaun: Tidal Flow	£88,221.34	A project supporting the first community owned/led tidal flow project in Wales at Strumble Head near Fishguard.
3. Marine Renewable Energy (MRE) Supply Chain	£40,262.79	A supply chain development project to provide a baseline understanding of the MRE supply chain in Wales, identifying those companies already working in the sector and those with strong potential to diversify.
4. Cwm Arian Renewable Energy: Supporting Resilience	£36,736.39	A project utilising digital technology to set up seminars with renewable energy experts to inspire local people/enterprises to develop new micro renewable schemes and to work collaboratively.
5. Marine Equipment Testing Area (META) Feasibility Study	£10,487.64	A feasibility study for a META in Pembrokeshire with the ultimate aim to enable the nurturing of local development and skills to realise economic potential in the 'new' marine energy market.
6. Project Dynamo	£9,195.57	A scoping study for a farm seeking to diversify into wind and solar power generation, possibly backed up by battery storage.
7. Transition Bro Gwaun: Renewable Energy	£8,986.33	A project to develop a business plan for the delivery of a community led integrated renewable energy system.

5.5 Theme 5: exploitation of digital technology

Theme 5 was described in the LDS as offering opportunities to address rural isolation both in economic and social situations. Ensuring digital technology is accessible and usable by Pembrokeshire's rural population is also identified as being essential if Pembrokeshire's communities are to be attractive and viable places to live in.

The priorities identified are to:

- Work towards digital inclusion for all – reducing isolation and including social, cultural, and telehealth opportunities and skills development
- Ensure that best use is made of new and arriving technology.

Eight projects have been funded under this theme, representing an investment of £165,425 of RDP funding which is eight per cent of the total funding spent.

As previously noted, ICT and digital technology is a feature of several the projects listed under the themes discussed above, as well as those reported under this theme. The projects listed below also include heritage and cultural projects as well as an innovative approach to support the utilisation of community halls in the area.

Project name	Funding	Summary
1. SPAN Arts - Span Digidol	£61,909.28	A pilot project to develop a new way of delivering cultural services via digital technology to rural communities across the whole of Pembrokeshire.
2. PLANED: Sharing Local History	£43,932.00	A project to create the website 'Heritage Pembrokeshire'.
3. Halls Remote Access	£14,999.00	A pilot to produce open-source software of benefit to all community halls in Pembrokeshire. The system combines online booking with smart locking using bespoke software to provide a fully integrated system allowing interested parties to book premises, etc. without any need for keyholders or manual intervention.
4. Narberth Museum - Women of West Wales project	£14,800.00	A project to research and start to collate the diverse histories of local women in new and innovative ways including a searchable database/website/app or virtual museum.
5. Pembrokeshire People First	£13,470.79	This project supported People with Learning Disabilities and Autism (PWLD/A) to engage with digital technology utilising a range of activities to support learning and safety. It was developed alongside a training programme around internet safety and accessibility that could be offered to other agencies such as schools, third sector groups etc.
6. St David's App	£10,430.00	A pilot digital tourism project developing a local news/info mobile app that obtains its content from social media activity (user generated content) website links, and RSS feeds.
7. Cultural Heritage and the Digitisation of the Historic Environment Record	£4,499.37	A pilot project to establish the methodology and procedures for creating digital polygons of sites and monuments recorded on the Dyfed Historic Environment Record, drawing on best practice developed elsewhere in the UK and Europe.
8. Pembrokeshire Historical Digital	£1,384.26	A project to enable the journals to be searched on the Society's website using keywords and tags to find specific subjects, places or persons as required.

5.6 Cooperation projects

As noted, several times within this report, cooperation is a key element of the LEADER approach. This is recognised within the LDS which notes that the LAG intends to 'initiate regional, national, and transnational linkages between innovation and research, transferring best practice models into mainstream delivery. This will include inter-territorial (regional within Wales and UK) and trans-national (across EU) co-operation.'

Four cooperative projects were ultimately funded, one of which was transnational working with a partner in Finland.

Project name	Funding	Summary
1. West Wales Rivers Trust - West Wales Angling Passport	£9,721 per LAG	<i>Pembrokeshire (lead), Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire.</i> The aim of this project was to identify and make ready new, existing, and potential fisheries and promote them via a well-established scheme known as the 'Fishing Passport'.
2. Radio Beca - Motivating by Broadcasting	£13,680 Per LAG	<i>Pembrokeshire, Ceredigion (lead) and Carmarthenshire</i> Radio Beca is a vehicle for stimulating, enabling, and supporting the communities within the three counties of west Wales to empower them to think, to act and to create their own futures. The Empowering Through Broadcasting project was set up to intensify Radio Beca's implementation of this principle thus further deepening the understanding of the potential of social broadcasting as a powerful means of creating and sustaining community. See: Adroddiad Terfynol - Tair Sir (eng).pdf (gov.wales)
3. Transnational project: Resource Wise Visions (ReWi Vision)	£10,000 ASB contribution	<i>Juväskylä - Finland (lead), Jyväskylä - Finland, Pembrokeshire - Wales</i> This was a youth exchange project. Ten Muurame High School students (Finland) and six students and two teachers from Pembrokeshire College participated in the activities in Muurame.
4. Feasibility Study on Sustainable Logistic Models of Food Distribution for South West Wales	£10,000 Per LAG	<i>Pembrokeshire, Ceredigion (lead) and Carmarthenshire</i> A feasibility study on sustainable logistic models of food distribution in South West Wales to connect local consumers with local producers.

6 Outcomes: findings of a survey of supported projects and a review of case study reports

The chapter sets out the findings of interviews undertaken with representatives of projects funded by Arwain Sir Benfro for the final phase of the evaluation. The focus of the interviews was on the outcomes of the projects and what had happened since the funding provided by LEADER had come to an end. We also draw on information provided within the 'case study' reports that have been produced for projects by the Arwain Sir Benfro team when projects have come to an end.

Key points

- Most projects felt that it was at least unlikely that their project would have progressed, without the support they received.
- Several themes were apparent when projects were asked to describe what they had achieved: confirmed viability/non-viability of scheme (leading to further funding in some instances), developed skills (capacity building/empowerment), increasing collaboration, strengthened relationships, and disseminating information. Improved people's lives and the locality and created employment opportunities.
- A significant amount of funding has been secured by several projects as follow-ons to the pilot activities and/or feasibility studies supported by Arwain Sir Benfro, with a total more than £2.5 million.
- Most projects taking part in the survey reported that there was a clear legacy to the project/activity funded by Arwain Sir Benfro.

6.1 Overview

Interviews were undertaken via video or telephone call with representatives of 48 of the projects supported by Arwain Sir Benfro for the final phase of the evaluation. The evaluation team sought to contact representatives from all 66 projects funded with 48 interviews being undertaken, as response rate of 73 per cent.

The responses included projects from across all five programme themes. It was however apparent that most projects could have been allocated to several the themes with a number, for example, including a digital element although categorised under the basic services or adding value theme. The discussion that follows is therefore general and considers all projects together, rather than splitting them into their themes.

The PLANED team provided short case studies for 51 of the projects supported, produced by the Arwain Sir Benfro team once those projects had come to an end. They included information on both the outcomes and lessons learnt reported by projects, which has been integrated into the discussion below.

6.2 What would have happened anyway?

A key question in any evaluation is what would have happened anyway, regardless of whether the support was provided? This is an important question when considering the additionality generated by any kind of intervention (project, scheme, programme, etc.).

Asking recipients of support or funding what would have happened if they had not received the support that they did is obviously somewhat problematic from a research perspective; respondents are inevitably somewhat biased in their responses and would not generally wish to suggest that they did not need the support or funding received. This needs to be considered when considering responses to this question. Nevertheless, it remains an important question to ask.

Respondents to the survey of projects were asked to rate the likelihood that the project would have happened anyway, without the support of Arwain Sir Benfro on a scale of 0 (no chance) to 4 (very likely). Almost half of respondents (23 of 48) gave zero as their response - they did not think there was any chance that their project would have happened without the support they received. As shown in Table 6.1, none of the respondents rated the chances of their project having happened without the financial support as being likely. A proportion of respondents were however unsure giving a neutral response of '2' – neither likely nor unlikely.

Table 6.1: Responses to the question, on a scale of 0 (no chance) to 4 (very likely), how likely is it that the project would have happened anyway, without the financial support of Arwain Sir Benfro?

Scale	Number of responses
0 (no chance)	23
1 (unlikely)	15
2 (neutral)	10
3 (likely)	0
4 (very likely)	0

Total number of responses: 48

Respondents were subsequently asked to explain their response. Where they had said there was no chance or that it was unlikely that the project would have happened without the support, the reasons given were that it was the type of project that it is difficult to get funding for, and they didn't think other funders would have funded it.

"[The project] just wouldn't have happened as it's a pilot and that usually isn't accepted by funders."

"I am not aware of other funders willing to fund feasibility studies."

"No. It would have just been a pipe dream and it was essential to have LEADER funding."

Nineteen respondents felt that the project would probably not have gone ahead without the support, but felt it was a possibility that funding could have been obtainable from elsewhere.

"It would be very difficult to find a funder to fund this type of feasibility study. LEADER was willing to embrace risk and try new ideas and allow organisations to learn and fail. Most funders would not have funded this project at such an early stage."

Seven felt that the project would have happened, but that either its start-date would have been delayed, it would not have happened at the same speed, or it would have happened on a significantly smaller scale. There is still therefore some added value because of the funding provided.⁸

"It would not have happened on the same level it would have been much smaller, the funding enabled us to do lots of work."

"The organisation was determined to use the shed, but progress would have been much slower without a paid project co-ordinator to identify funding sources and the best use and options for the building. Whilst we did find other funding sources to develop the building, we would have struggled to find a funder to do a feasibility study of the use of the building."

Where respondents highlighted that it was difficult to provide a meaningful answer to the question they felt it was impossible to know whether they would have been able to access comparative support from another funder. However, it is likely in those circumstances that activities happened sooner than they would otherwise have done because of the LEADER funding provided.

"I can't answer that... I would have searched elsewhere, and I may or may not have got the funding but if not, I would have gone back to [another potential source of funding] who are huge supporters. So, I don't know is the answer but certainly without LEADER funding we would not be where we are today."

⁸ The definition of additionality is the extent to which activity takes place at all, on a larger scale, earlier or within a specified designated area or target group because of the intervention. Source: [Additionality Guide - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

6.3 Perceived achievements

As part of the survey, respondents were asked to describe what their project had achieved. This was an open question to allow the respondent to describe what had been achieved in whatever way they chose. Several themes were apparent when the responses provided were reviewed, which were that the projects in questions had achieved one or more of the following:

- Confirmed viability/non-viability of scheme (leading to further funding in some instances)
- Developed skills (capacity building/empowerment)
- Increasing collaboration, strengthened relationships, and disseminating information
- Improved people's lives and the locality
- Created employment opportunities.

Each of these outcomes is discussed further below.

6.3.1 Confirmed viability/non-viability of scheme

As shown in Chapter 5, feasibility studies are a key feature of the Arwain Sir Benfro scheme. Where respondents to the survey stated that the project confirmed viability/non-viability, eight were a feasibility study or pilot study. For these, the study had found either that the proposed scheme would be viable, that it would be completely unviable, or that modifications would be needed in order to achieve viability.

Finding that a proposed project is not viable should not be seen as a negative outcome. For example, where schemes were found to be unviable, respondents did report having acquired new skills and gained new contacts. Two respondents highlighted how important it was to be able to identify barriers to progression of the scheme at an early stage. There is also a clear link in these instances to the development of skills/capacity within the group.

"The people involved in the project developed excellent project management skills and as a group we developed useful links with possible future partners including staff in the local authority, National Park, Natural Resources Wales, University of Bangor, and Swansea. All of these contacts would be useful for future renewable energy projects."

Thirteen of the case study reports, mainly feasibility studies, report that projects engendered better understanding of issues underpinning the project, such as establishing the current situation, whether there was a need for a proposed service or scheme, and what precisely was needed. Projects also explored whether a proposed scheme would be logistically viable and identified potential barriers.

"The purpose of the first phase investigation was to establish what the current situation is with regard to commons within Pembrokeshire, collect baseline data, examine the barriers to the exercise of rights on commons and begin to develop solutions that will lead to a second phase of activity."

“Attractions and businesses of interest were approached and engaged whilst tour guests from the local community provided feedback.”

In addition to a better wider understanding of issues, the case studies highlight that 10 of the pilot and feasibility studies were able to establish a definite way forward because of the project having taken place.

“Following project and scoping activities, the Project is now moving forward through another Welsh based company who have secured funding to deliver seven pilot schemes.”

6.3.2 Led to further grant funding

Six respondents stated that the LEADER funding led to them successfully applying for further grants from other funders. This is clearly a very positive outcome with one project reporting that since the LEADER funded element of the project had ended, they have secured further funding of more than £2.5 million for the next phase of the project. In each instance, it is reported that these follow up funds could not have been accessed if the initial activity, funded by Arwain Sir Benfro, had not taken place.

In four instances, the LEADER funding delivered the first phase of a ‘work package’, which in some cases led to significant further funding bids. The Feasibility Study for Haverfordwest Castle project for example led to completion of the first phase at cost of £100,000, the planning of a second phase (£500,000) and an application for £17.6 million to develop a shopping area and events space. Another respondent stated that their feasibility study has enabled them to secure “a large lottery funding grant over four years”.

6.3.3 Skills development

Six respondents reported that the funding had allowed volunteers to be trained, either by the group leaders delivering the project, external professionals engaged as part of the project, or new volunteers sharing their skills. This allowed new and existing volunteers to develop a variety of skills, including improving wellbeing, befriending, digital skills, and things like cookery, theatre, and photography.

In addition to targeted training, one respondent also reported that the experience and knowledge gained through managing and delivering the project itself was used to develop a similar scheme.

“[The project] trained over 20 new leaders. Working directly with participants improving their wellbeing...”

“[The project] used the experience and the knowledge gained from this project to set up a community wind turbine energy scheme.”

These are important outcomes and fit with the ambition that LEADER schemes would support the development of the 'capacity' within rural areas of those involved in rural development projects.

The case studies show that, for eight of the projects, the provision of volunteering opportunities was an important outcome. One of the projects (Eco Champions) is reported to have recruited 259 volunteers. In some instances, the volunteering led to upskilling, and the volunteers were able to continue after the duration of the project.

"All artists and volunteers have gone on to continue delivering workshops. During the project we were contacted by others wanting to volunteer. In order to go on delivering their own workshops, they first came along to one of the project's organised events before delivering their own. This skill-sharing ... has enabled individuals in the community to maintain drawing groups independently making the project sustainable."

The case studies also show that, an important outcome for 11 of the projects was the upskilling of volunteers/participants. This included soft skills (e.g., social skills, confidence), as well as specialised training (e.g., counselling, how to deliver events and activities, digital skills), which in at least one instance would reportedly generate employment opportunities.

"Train the trainer course. To empower, nurture and train a group of volunteers to become accredited nature connection activity leaders to assist in the delivery of the "nature connections and wellbeing" course. This course will then be written up, packaged, and presented as a toolkit for future delivery."

"Employment opportunities for those who have also taken up the opportunity to take part in volunteer counselling training."

"It provided young people with training in digital technologies and valuable work experience."

"The project did open up opportunities for volunteers to learn new, transferable skills."

"The project created volunteer opportunities and provided relevant training. A key feature of the project was to up-skill local people of all ages. Training in historical research, events management, marketing, first aid and catering was provided. People were also trained as local history guides for event weekends..."

6.3.4 Collaboration, strengthened relationships and disseminating information

Networking and collaboration are also identified as key outcomes of the LEADER approach and 12 respondents to the survey stated that their projects had facilitated the building of new relationships and the strengthening of existing relationships with stakeholders.

“This project ensures that the community can exploit the opportunities offered by a hitherto untouched late medieval monument.”

Our review of the case studies finds that, for 10 projects, providing a new service was a main outcome. Services included online resources (e.g., publicly accessible, and digitally indexed journals, a web-based toolkit for community groups/schools) and physical resources (e.g., a community fridge, a repair café).

“Production of a legacy education toolkit that can be used by schools and community groups to help with conservation beyond the project lifetime.”

“The Community Fridge is still active with the coordinator now employed as the Development Worker.”

6.3.5 Improving people's lives

Survey respondents reported that their project had improved people's lives in various ways, including mental health and wellbeing, and had helped alleviate loneliness and poverty. Respondents also stated that their projects had provided training and facilitated skills sharing.

Several projects brought the community together, either by providing a permanent space for them to gather (e.g., a community hub, a café, a playing field) or by providing opportunities to work together. In five cases, respondents stated that the benefits continued into the long-term because of the project.

“Our online plays, singing did help to alleviate loneliness and depression with people and also helped our volunteers to share skills like cookery, photography workshops...”

“Through research within the community it was found that many older people wanted things to do, be involved and what could be done working with the Lee Davies Day Care Centre. It was found that they wanted to have luncheon clubs or coffee mornings, as well as health and wellbeing...”

“Removed a town centre derelict boarded up site and replaced with a lovely renovated cultural and community hub now open five to seven days a week for the community. Added a place for people to call their own - not a retail space, somewhere to meet and learn new skills.”

The review of the case studies finds that, for six of the projects, directly supporting vulnerable people was one of their main outcomes. This was in the form of practical (physical) support as well as supporting mental health and improving general health and wellbeing.

“The project achieved what it set out to accomplish by equipping homes for re-settlement, providing interpreters and raising cultural awareness in three local communities.”

“The project has supported local families living in food poverty to have healthy and nutritional meals and snacks.”

“The therapeutic sessions had both creative and social aspects, and also introduced and referred beneficiaries to a wider network of support agencies.”

“The services improved mental wellbeing for participants as the subject matter included handling depression, bereavement, divorce and anger, all of which have an impact on emotional wellbeing.”

6.3.6 Creating employment opportunities

In several instances, the project resulted in the employment of one or more staff (either the person who instigated the project or people who were specially recruited). Usually this was just for the duration of the project, but in a handful of instances the success of the original LEADER-funded project led to project continuation and expansion, meaning further staff were employed in the long term.

“Leader paid my wages to research and set up the community centre fridge and larger project...”

“We employed someone to look into the situation between young people and bands...”

“We started with four staff but now have 14...”

Looking at the case studies, they show that nine projects reported either having benefitted their local economy or having developed the potential to benefit it. This was in terms of jobs creation but also increasing tourism and/or providing opportunities for businesses.

“Two part-time jobs were safeguarded for the pilot project and have become sustainable jobs for the Pembrokeshire Remakery (supported by the Landfill communities tax fund) enabling the two project managers to be funded...”

“The redevelopment of the site, alongside the newly-branded Milford Waterfront, has the potential to increase levels of tourism in the Milford Haven area.”

“The app is up and running, linking the community together with useful, pertinent information ... The project plans to add more content and businesses, continue to advertise, making roadside advertising banners...”

6.4 Meeting expectations

Most respondents (40/48) felt that their project had fully met their expectations. Where they did not, respondents gave three main factors as reasons: COVID-19, issues with legacy, and the feasibility study result being negative.

Two respondents reported legacy issues, both with virtual means of dissemination (a website not being updated and becoming outmoded, and podcasts not being downloaded due to a lack of promotion).

“...partner organisations are less involved and are no longer updating the website. It has become a local authority only project and I think that is a shame. The website itself has also become a bit dated and clunky to use compared to other similar websites.”

Two respondents stated that they were unable to do as much community engagement as they had expected to, due to COVID-19 restrictions. The other stated that the land train which was part of their project could not operate as planned due to COVID-19 restrictions.

“COVID-19 also meant that we could not run the tours in Summer 2020 and 2021.”

6.5 Legacy: the situation today

It is positive to note that 31 respondents stated that the project was still in existence, after the LEADER funded element had come to an end, either as part of an ongoing (and in some cases, evolving) scheme, or as a static resource which is still in use.

“The feasibility study is completed but the project is ongoing. We are looking to have the solar panels installed by the end of 2022. In the process of organising a connection to the main grid and to get planning permission for the solar panels and battery storage. We were able to use the feasibility study to find a developer who will pay for the solar panels and their installation, and a lot of the information has been used in the planning application.”

“The feasibility study was completed which gave us viable options for the redevelopment of the site including a breakdown of the costs and emphasised the demand for redevelopment from stakeholders and the community. The data and recommendations from the feasibility study were used to secure Welsh government funding for the building.”

“It is up and running and the society keep the website up to date we will shortly be adding the newest journal in a few weeks.”

“So, projects still exist online although we are not able to do some of the workshops with the children for example robotic painting as we have staff shortages at the moment.”

Of the seven who said their scheme had since received further funding, three projects were feasibility studies, and one was a two-year pilot study. Three of the six projects were under theme 2 (facilitating pre-commercial development, business partnerships and short supply chains). The other three came under theme 1 (adding value to local identity and natural and cultural resources) and theme 4 (renewable energy at community level).

Two of the projects had since received funding from Welsh Government (although regarding one of them, a feasibility study to explore options for the redevelopment of a derelict commercial property, the respondent stated that subsequently plans had to be put on hold due to COVID-19 and a change in economic climate). Most respondents did not state how much subsequent funding they had received, but one project (to deliver a range of tourism services to Pembrokeshire) had received £100,000.

"... now we have the model we will be able to grow the membership, and hopefully 75-85 per cent of tourism businesses will all follow the same brand, and it has already created benefits as all together - as one, we have managed to secure for funding of £100,000 to carry out this work."

"The feasibility study was completed, and the County Council approved the project. The council secured funding from Welsh Government and a building has been secured and architects have drawn up plans. Construction was meant to start in 2021 but COVID-19 has caused delays. We expect the visitor centre to be open to the public by 2025."

"It's a long-term project and since the project ended, we have secured an extra £2.6 million."

Of the 13 projects that had ended, one was a pilot study and was still considered to have achieved its objectives. Three were feasibility studies, two of which showed the project to be viable (but it has not yet continued) and one which showed the project not to be viable (but the information has been used to build on the idea).

A few projects were only intended to be short-term. One respondent stated that although the project did not continue, further funding has since been received for a similar project.

"The feasibility study was completed and was excellent in terms of the quality of data collected. The data will be very useful if any future tidal energy schemes are developed."

"It's finished the pilot period for now it came to a nice end, a few things came off from it, in a way COVID-19 was handy as people wanted to know about their councils and we were there to advise."

"Families from Syria were integrated into areas - two families of six and four in Fishguard, family of eight into Narberth and family of six into Haverfordwest which we arranged, and they are now out of the camps into rented property."

Importantly, a number of those who reported that their project had come to an end described it as still having an impact. In some instances, the project built a resource (e.g., a website) which is still there for people to use. In other instances, the contacts, ideas, or knowledge accumulated during the project will/have been utilised by the group in their plans for the future.

"It's running, working, being used and can be downloaded and use to all."

"We no longer have anyone coordinating as the Eco Champion Officer was just employed during the two-year pilot, but the impact is still there, and the message is still being put out via Facebook, etc."

"The project couldn't go beyond the feasibility study as the cost of connecting the solar farm to the main electricity grid was too high. We used the information and contacts from the project to help develop a wind turbine and community energy scheme. This has allowed us to set up a climate change fund that allows other community groups in the area to apply for funding to do projects that combat climate change."

6.6 Future plans

Fifteen respondents stated that the project will be continuing, while only four had no plans for it to continue in some way. Many responses to the question (21) suggested that the legacy of the project will be important to the group's future plans.

Sixteen respondents stated that their projects will continue. A number stated that the LEADER-funded work has put them into a position where this is possible, as it has helped develop a system for the delivery of services. Several respondents stated that the LEADER funding helped them establish a network of contacts, facilitating continuing relationships with stakeholders.

The LEADER funding has enabled groups to establish the techniques (e.g., online learning resources, digital recording, cataloguing, or archiving) necessary to set up a project and allow it to continue. In some instances, it has funded the development of the skillset needed to deliver a project. Overall, the respondents are positive about the project's future and feel they are in a good place in terms of continuing their work. One respondent stated that the initial LEADER-funded project has allowed the organisation to redesign the wider project in accordance with the findings.

"The project will continue as everything is in place and we will continue to send our volunteers to collect the food from the various sources and locals will still donate their surplus..."

A number have plans not just to continue, but to expand. Now a model has been achieved, this has allowed the group/organisation the capacity to expand their operations – either by widening what they offer/who they offer it to, or by expanding their premises/the area in which they operate.

"We have secured funding now through the 2nd home levy and phase 2 is also draining other areas of the playing field and buying new play equipment and phase 3 is putting in an all-weather, wheelchair friendly path around the playing field and all this has been possible due to the initial pilot so this will be the legacy if you like for future generations."

"The project continues and in fact it is evolving all the time. We have just taken on another young person, and we hope to take on two more..."

Twenty-three respondents generally highlighted that the LEADER project was just the beginning, and the information, skills and connections will be used in their plans for the future. A number were feasibility and pilot studies, which will be able to draw on the lessons learned. Several respondents expressed their intention to continue with similar projects and indicated that the experience gained/skillsets generated will facilitate this. Several respondents stated that they will be looking to develop a funding bid in the near future.

"... the devices are being built, tested over the next five years and more and more projects will spring up so although in the scale of things its quite small at the moment it will be growing."

"... we have a new project starting, and this is the legacy from Leader."

"Looking into possible funding options to make the dragon fountain."

Two of the four projects with no current plans to continue were renewable energy projects run by the same organisation and it was stated for both that the position could change in the future if a commercial partner is found.

"The Tidal Energy project is currently dormant although with rising electricity prices and more government support for renewable energy we think it could become viable again if we can find a commercial partner."

6.7 Lessons learnt by projects

The case studies produced for projects by the Arwain Sir Benfro team, of which there are 51, provide information on the lessons learnt identified by projects at the end of their lifetime.

Fourteen projects indicated that no particular lessons were learned as all went according to plan. Many lessons learned (25 of the 51 projects) were around planning. This included timescales, capacity, and planning for events (e.g., thinking through issues such as data capture including detailed attendance registers).

"Detailed attendance sheets would give a greater insight into attendance at sessions, whether people attended all six sessions or if new people attended each session."

Ten projects reported having been over optimistic about timescales, both for carrying out the project work and for administration and reporting on the project.

"Experience has shown that the time required to upload, proofread and edit each journal was underestimated when drawing up the project plan."

"The issue we encountered was of insufficient administrative time within the grant ... In future we will cost applications more carefully and realistically and be more cautious about what can be done within the timescale."

Eight projects highlighted having underestimated their capacity in terms of people and budget allocation.

"Reducing the number of projects at the start of the period would have allowed the project to focus on a small number of initial ideas and thoroughly explore them before moving on to the next idea."

"Travel costs escalated as the project progressed due to the location of delivery. It would have been better to have allowed a larger budget for this."

The need to be flexible was also highlighted as a lesson learned by three of the projects. They found that plans had been subject to change, and there was a need to be adaptive to accommodate those (often unforeseeable) changes.

"The project had to adapt continuously and especially when the pandemic hit."

"Original proposals are very much subject to change, and we advise anybody writing their initial Expression of Interest for similar funding to be aware and open to their project taking different directions."

Five projects indicated that they had learned the importance of good promotion and engagement.

"Promotion and reaching the participants to sign up to the Nature Connections and Wellbeing was challenging and we were initially undersubscribed."

"... project updates need to be regularly communicated to maintain a sense of 'team' as the project develops."

The importance of networking and building relationships was another learning outcome highlighted by several projects. Three stated that working more closely with other organisations would have been beneficial. A further three projects found that establishing/maintaining relationships with organisations/the community was more difficult than anticipated.

"...more meetings with the steering group and specialists so that better engagement could have been achieved earlier and helped produce a more conclusive end report."

"The lack of engagement within the community and other community councils was disappointing, despite the project officer's numerous attempts."

7 Project case studies

This chapter presents case studies for projects that have been funded by LEADER in Pembrokeshire.

7.1 Community Wellbeing and Resilience Project

The Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 includes an expectation that public bodies need to make sure that when making their decisions they consider the impact they could have on people living their lives in Wales in the future. One of the things that public bodies are expected to think about is 'involvement' - the importance of involving people with an interest in achieving the wellbeing goals and ensuring that those people reflect the diversity of the area which the body serves.

Introduced in 2018, the Community Wellbeing and Resilience Project (CWBR) is a response to the introduction of the Act and has sought to improve community and individual wellbeing, as well as the resilience of communities by aiding town and community councils with their public engagement in relation to wellbeing.



In total, the project engaged with over 1,000 people directly and facilitated 27 community workshops.

There was a particular focus within the project on youth engagement with the introduction of a Youth Officer role within PLANED to liaise with schools, colleges, and youth community activities. This has helped generate youth induction booklets for youth representatives, as well as a youth engagement toolkit for councils and community groups. It has utilised an 'asset-based approach' to development by promoting the use of what is already there, and to focus on the strengths that areas already have.

"Perhaps now they [young people] can find their councils are more accessible, I hope, even though there's a lot more to be done, the average age of a councillor in Pembrokeshire is 60, people feel they're not representative of them, it led to another role a liaison officer with councils, we want to do great things." (PLANED Team Member)

It was found that councils were already looking to engage with the public and saw this as a priority. However, they were struggling for time to get people involved and meet with them. Therefore, the project worked to make it easier for people to engage with their councillors in a way that works for both them and the council.

The following was an example of how the project has benefited communities, suggested by the team delivering the project. A community in north Pembrokeshire had suffered a water outage and, upon investigation, it was found that the water had iron in it. The links that had been developed between the public and the council were utilised to consider and plan how to address and solve the issue.

“We were working with the council to facilitate meetings... We helped with people in Welsh Government to engage with the communities. We helped create a community group to chair and run meetings.” (PLANED Team Member)

During the COVID-19 pandemic the project secured Lottery funding (about £22,000) to help it be flexible and able to support groups in need. During this time the team were approached by young people voicing their praise or concerns with regards to their town or community councils which the CWBR team have been able to take on board. The team were also able to develop the ability of people to engage remotely through digital video calling platforms.

The funding has been utilised in ways such as moderating meetings for organisations such as Solva Car’s Together for Change, Pembrokeshire Community Food Network, and the 50+ Forum. It has also been used to further facilitate their work with young people, which since the funding has partly involved creating and hosting webinars for youth representatives to join Pembroke Dock Town Council. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic they have also engaged Milford Haven residents through a well-being survey.

According to project staff the project has been successful in everything that it wanted to achieve, it has been able to adapt and be flexible enough to offer a bespoke service. They are coming to the end of a successful pilot which has enabled them to test and trial what they would like to do. In their eyes they have helped make councils more accessible to the public, especially young people.

Looking to the future, since the conclusion of the project in May 2020, the team are keen to look specifically at youth representation and how they can continue to move forward towards achieving that. They want to help town and community councils diversify and bring younger members through by looking at the barriers and challenges for both sides. They envision that to help with this they could develop a training programme for both councillors and young people to break down barriers and debunk myths.

Example of a CWBR meeting flyer

SAY YOUR PIECE.... ...ON THE PAVILION AND PLAYPARK!

**Llanrhian Community Council
welcomes you to a community
consultation day at Trefin
Village Hall....**

Please join us on
**Saturday 14th
March,
10am - 1pm**

PLANED's Community Well-being and
Resilience project is working with
Llanrhian Community Council to gather
and capture your thoughts and ideas.

**For more information, please
contact Abi Marriott**

 abim@planed.org.uk

 01834 860 965



7.2 Active and Connected Communities

The Active and Connected Communities project was delivered by [Pembrokeshire Association of Voluntary Services \(PAVS\)](#) in partnership with Pembrokeshire County Council and Hywel Dda University Health Board. It ran from October of 2016 to September of 2018 with a total budget of just under £500,000 receiving just over £170,000 of LEADER funding.

The purpose of the project was to help the residents of Pembrokeshire, especially those living in isolation, to become more connected to the communities in which they live. This was seen as being vitally important given the aging population of Pembrokeshire which is expected to continue to rise over the coming years, especially in the 85+ demographic. Social isolation and loneliness were linked to issues that were happening higher up the continuum of care for the adult social services team. Both were linked to low mood anxiety and depression which in turn impacted their physical and mental health, leading them to access GPs and social services for support.

The focus has been on building relationships and developing links to local events and organisations to strengthen communities and provide opportunities for all residents to 'engage'. The vision was that, through these interactions with others at events and through organisations, isolated people can build social networks therefore reducing the demand for the limited and over-stretched support services.

The project also helped people to set up and develop enterprises that offer care and support whether these be social enterprises or micro-enterprises. This resulted in 29 micro-enterprises being incorporated into a directory, and a peer support network being formed. Over a six-month period, it is reported that 20 of these micro enterprises oversaw the support of 174 people, equating to 12,427 hours of support.

A team of four 'community connectors' were introduced whose role has been to engage with the most isolated members of communities and to help connect them to what's going on. Specifically, their role involved working with elderly and isolated members of the public who have been referred to them either through support organisations or by 'self-referral'. Once engaged community connectors provided advice, information, and support either directly or by signposting to other groups and services in the area regarding what activities are ongoing in their local area, and how they can engage with them.

As the project went on it began to receive an increased number of self-referrals from the public, as opposed to the referrals from social care organisations that had been the main source at the start of the project. This suggested that members of the public were not only aware of the project but also that they were becoming aware of their isolation and the fact that participating would be of benefit to them.

"It was pleasing to see the rates of self-referrals increase so that demonstrated there was a need." (PAVS Team Member)

It also became apparent to the team at PAVS that some communities “had masses” of events and organisations that could be referred to, whereas some communities had hardly anything. Therefore, the project took it upon itself to find ways to fill gaps.

In terms of what the project was able to achieve, the support in terms of transport and digital connectivity for the public are highlighted as particular strengths. It has also been reported that identifying gaps in support allowed a more targeted approach to be introduced.

For the team at PAVS, the main legacy of the project is that, through their work, members of the public have been able to describe improvements in their lives.

The project ended at the end of September in 2018, since which PAVS have secured funding from the Local Health Board and the local authority to ensure that the connector element of the support was able to carry on, ensuring that the four community connector roles that were established during the project can remain active. During the COVID-19 pandemic it incorporated a digital element to its service to continue to engage with communities while social distancing measures were in place.

“The project was over at the time COVID-19 came about. At the end of the project, we had secured funding for the connector element we wanted to carry on. What COVID-19 brought into sharp focus was we had noticed that it was all face to face but there were opportunities to do things digitally, now the connector programme has a digital element, and it will continue to do so.” (PAVS Team Member)

What this project has taught the team is that there is interest within the local community to set up micro-enterprises and building on this once these have been established people gain great satisfaction in working this way. Additionally, it was found that there is not only strong and growing demand for these kinds of services but people, their families, and professionals all highly value the services and support they offer.

7.3 Cwm Arian Renewable Energy (CARE) Ltd: Supporting Resilient Renewable Communities

The Supporting Resilient Renewable Communities project ran from January 2017 to October 2019 with the goal of inspiring local people and organisations to think of new ways to harness renewable energy at a micro-level. The project was run by [Cwm Arian Renewable Energy \(CARE\) Ltd](#) and received nearly £37,000 of LEADER funding towards its total of around £52,000.



The project was based in north Pembrokeshire and focused on achieving the following outcomes:

- Develop community renewable enterprises
- Use of low carbon technology within the business sector
- Support local people with household energy improvements
- Develop energy storage initiatives on a household and community level.

The project sought to achieve this by facilitating events both digitally using discussions by video with renewable energy experts, and through in-person events in communities in locations such as village halls.

In total the project engaged with 534 individuals through 26 workshops.

The goal for the workshops has been to increase the awareness and motivations of communities to pursue opportunities surrounding carbon free travel, heat storage battery storage as well as other environmentally conscious options that are relevant to both them and the communities in which they reside. The workshops brought together community organisations, householders, and volunteers with experts to share knowledge, develop skills, and discuss potential ideas and projects.

The idea for the project stems from the identification of high amounts of fuel poverty in the area, with many households relying on oil and gas deliveries. The project team saw this as an opportunity to pioneer the introduction of more renewable energy sources into the area.

The project built-up a substantial amount of momentum in the area and CARE subsequently pursued the introduction of a 700W wind turbine that could help supply local homes with energy, a project that they had previously considered but never progressed. Energy monitoring equipment was also installed in a village hall to assess the feasibility of utilising batteries as a means of powering the building. The project has also inspired bids for funding for more ambitious actions such as a hydrogen fuel project which, although unsuccessful, is something that may not have been pursued otherwise.

One of the main benefits for those involved in the project was the introduction of a platform on which they could discuss their ideas with the project staff and experts in renewable energy.

“Our feedback is that people appreciate this access to information, so the beneficiaries are those receiving energy efficiency advice or on the growing connections projects.” (CARE Team Member)

Another benefit of the projects is the increased capacity for communities to pursue funding opportunities for renewable energy projects within their communities. For the turbine in particular, having part time staff available who are aware of what is needed to see the project through is said by the team at CARE to have proven beneficial in securing funding for the turbine that was installed in 2019 in Crymych (shown in the image below), a ward which has been identified by CARE as one of the two in most risk of fuel poverty in Wales.



The legacy of the project for the team includes both the physical wind turbine that has been introduced in part due to the support generated in the community through the project, and the connections that have been made between CARE and the community resulting in the change in attitudes and motivation towards exploring renewable energy and energy efficiency. Demand for this support has continued to grow to the extent that there are now three part-time staff operating in the area who are available to provide energy efficiency advice to the community.

“The wind turbine and the subsequent growing better connection projects are both aspect of the project’s legacy but then also the community scoping which came out of the evaluation report. People liked the workshops we were doing and having that local source of information so we kind of looked at a bid for giving energy efficiency advice to local people and now we are delivering that.” (CARE Team Member)

7.4 Adders are Amazing

Adders are Amazing was a project developed by [Amphibian and Reptile Groups of the UK \(ARG UK\)](#) and the [Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust \(ARC\)](#) with the goal of developing a National Adder Conservation Strategy. The project developed because of concerns that the native species of adder is coming close to extinction in large parts of England and Wales. It ran from March 2018 to March 2019, with a total cost of just under £28,000 of which nearly £15,000 was provided by the LEADER scheme.



The project sought to promote the conservation of adders through engaging with the local community to raise awareness and reduce the fear of the endangered species among the population of Pembrokeshire as well as encouraging a wider appreciation for local wildlife. Techniques including arts crafts and drama as well as other innovative approaches were utilised to make conservation more accessible for a wider group of people.

The team engaged with communities, in particular on the St David's Peninsula. Key partners were also engaged including Pembrokeshire County Council, the National Trust, Pembrokeshire Coast National Park, and local attraction,

During the lifespan the project engaged with 1,978 people, the majority of which being from local communities, including over 500 children and families from across four local schools at an evening event in October 2018.

The schools and groups involved in the activities have come from a range of areas and backgrounds which have also been delivered to those with special educational needs.

The project took a holistic approach to a multitude of aspects involved in conservation, including surveying and monitoring. In addition to this it also looked to reduce the risk surrounding adder bites in humans and pets through providing information surrounding what to do in the event of a bite to ensure the correct treatment is sought and that this is done in a timely manner.

Through the resources produced and the events ran, the project feels that it has been able to have a big impact across Pembrokeshire, increasing support for its work as well as adder conservation in general. These resources are available on the [ARG UK website](#) for anyone to download and comprise of sheets detailing different activities that can be used to introduce and inform both children and adults about the ecology and conservation of adders through a range of mediums.



Since the conclusion of the pilot project, the team have run an 'Adder Campaign'. They have rolled out the resource packs developed as part of the project to volunteer groups across the UK, as well as schools and community groups. This was made possible due to the national level publicity that the pilot project generated which subsequently prompted interest from Scotland, other parts of England and Wales, and mainland Europe.

"We were very pleased to be funded by PLANED as this has enabled us to pilot an innovative and creative approach to conserving our only native venomous snake, and to try to untangle the complex and mixed emotions this provokes in the wider public, in a positive way. The project has received national and international acclaim." (ARG UK Staff)

Another impact/legacy is the establishment of a new volunteer 'Pembrokeshire Amphibian and Reptile Group' which was launched in January 2019.

7.5 Feasibility Study for Marine Equipment Testing Area (META)

The Marine Equipment Testing Area (META) feasibility study ran from April to July 2017 and was run by [Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum](#) under the [Marine Energy Wales Programme](#). The project investigated the possibility of developing a META in Pembroke Dock, looking specifically at the possibility of integrating marine energy sites into the area, particularly wave and tidal energy. The total cost of the feasibility study was just under £15,000 with about £10,000 provided by LEADER.



The aim was for the sites created to allow for experimental renewable energy technology to be trialled in a controlled environment that still had the characteristics necessary to effectively test the devices. The study focussed on the barriers and opportunities regarding both the establishment of the necessary local supply chain to support a testing area, as well as those relating to the investment and development of the site. It also looked to understand whether the barriers that did exist has the potential to be overcome through realistic actions.

The feasibility study was successful in confirming that a site was feasible in Pembrokeshire and that, in fact, it would be a perfect location for the site due to the wave and tidal resource that it has. Milford Haven Port was identified as being a particularly suitable site due to the deep water and local supply chain to assist energy developers in fabricating their devices and enabling commercialisation.

It was envisioned that the sites would attract and support marine energy device developers, supply chain companies, and universities in their development of new products and services, in addition to providing job roles within the sites themselves, as well as in the surrounding area. Indeed, jobs were created within the project team itself, growing from four staff at its inception to 14 as of October 2021.

A key finding of the study was that there is not only economic value in the introduction of such a site, but also that the knowledge gained from this study could be applied to similar areas across Wales, such as Anglesey, which are envisioned to provide footholds for supporting this industry across Wales. By conducting this feasibility study, staff now have a greater awareness of the best process and an understanding of the associated costs for the development of the facility.

“We have completed environmental scans of the seabed to make sure nothing is being disturbed, introduce aqua culture to bring oysters back, we are helping the local fishing community by getting local boat owners involved taking people out to the test areas - of which there are five.” (Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum Member)

The project has also provided evidence to stakeholders that the sea testing site is not only feasible but could be beneficial to them and the local area.

Since the study, £2.6 million of additional funding has been secured to set up phase 1 of the project which includes the introduction of five operational test sites in Pembroke Port. According to project team none of which would have been possible without LEADER support to fund the feasibility study.

7.6 Haverhub

[Haverhub](#) is a not-for-profit social enterprise that aims to create a diverse venue for locals to meet, work, socialise and share talent. The hub itself is an old derelict post office which is a Grade II listed building built in 1936 (see image below).

Funding provided by Arwain Sir Benfro was integral to supporting the conversion of the building by providing planning application fees and well as professional fees that allowed the development of the site to begin.



Haverhub formally opened in July 2021 upon completion of the building work and has been busy with space bookings, office, and hot desking, with various large events and classes now having regular spots in the calendar. The hub has paid staff and are continuing to build a team at the venue, in addition to securing volunteers for the venue.

The support from LEADER (£15,000) was integral to the development of the sites as the initial fees and costs would not have been feasible under other capital funds. The funding was utilised to help provide site surveys, drawings, and specifications to manage renovations, as well as enhancing the business plan and other planning tools.

Since being supported by LEADER, the project has gone on to secure an addition £800,000 in funding to support their community project.

“These were the initial funds for fees and costs which would not have been possible under other capital funds. It was flexible and allowed for start-up costs. Planning application fees and bat surveys! This was our project's FIRST funding and my first experience of a grant application. We have since secured another £800,000 or so. So, this started an important community project!” (Haverhub Team Member)

The hub provides a space through which volunteers can engage with the local community and contribute to the reduction of many local issues including, social isolation, and skill poverty. The key beneficiaries are seen as being the local community including the old, the young, schools, local businesses, community groups, artists, musicians, as well as visitors to the area.

“The funding removed a town centre derelict boarded up site and replaced with a lovely renovated cultural and community hub now open five to seven days a week for the community. Added a place for people to call their own - not a retail space, somewhere to meet and learn new skills.” (Haverhub Team Member)

The project has enabled the organisational restructure of the hub offering space for meetings and new services for the community to access. The hub runs a range of events spanning from craft activities, musical sessions, and practical skills classes. Having this space has led to an increased sense of optimism in the communities for opportunities to come together socially. The support has also led to partnerships for the hub with [IndyCube](#) who have worked to provide collaborative and hot desk spaces for SMEs and new entrepreneurs. They also have partnerships to support the hosting of adult education classes on the site.

Looking to the future the project team are interested in increasing their marketing capacity, and to continue to grow their team at all levels from volunteers to the board of directors. They are also interested in securing additional funding to continue to renovate the rear of the building which they feel could still benefit from development.

8 Conclusion and recommendations

This final chapter draws together the conclusions of the evaluation and makes several recommendations. There is no commitment on the part of the Welsh Government to any follow-up to the LEADER scheme in Wales at the time of writing. Recommendations are therefore made below for consideration in the future, if and when, a new LEADER or similar scheme is introduced in Pembrokeshire.

The allocation of funding

The Arwain Sir Benfro led LEADER scheme in Pembrokeshire was, between April 2015 and December 2021, responsible for the investment of just over £5.2m in the local area, 80 per cent of which was spent supporting the implementation of projects. Another £1.2m has been drawn-in as match funding provided by the projects that have been supported. This supported the implementation of 71 projects (including four cooperative projects funded with LAGs in other areas) at an average of around £30,000 per project. These are relatively small sums of funding allocated to a substantial, and wide ranging, set of projects that have been developed from within the local area.

The funding available to support projects was committed early. This demonstrates a high demand for support in the area and an awareness on the part of the LAG of the importance of committing funding early to ensure that it is fully utilised. However, it also meant that there was no funding available for projects during the latter stages of the scheme and no opportunity for the LAG to identify and address any potential gaps in the activities being undertaken. We believe that there is an argument that this should have been considered with at least some funding ringfenced for the latter stages of the scheme.

Recommendation 1: The potential to reserve a proportion of funding for the latter stages of any future scheme should be considered to allow the LAG to support any new projects that may emerge or respond proactively to any gaps in the activity that may become apparent.

Performance indicators

The number of performance indicators (and associated targets) in place to monitor the performance of the LEADER scheme in Pembrokeshire (and in Wales as a whole) is limited. The most notable data that is available is that the scheme has engaged with 865 stakeholders, supported 5,356 participants, and safeguarded 43 jobs.

Other 'unofficial' performance indicators that we would argue are noteworthy include:

- Number of pilot projects supported: 71
- Investment in rural development projects: £4.1 million
- Match funding levered into the area: £1.2 million
- Follow-up funding secured by supported projects: £2.5 million (at least).

Using a limited set of indicators has benefits from an administrative perspective but means that we have limited data with which to assess the achievements of the scheme. We are however not overly critical of this approach as identifying meaningful indicators for a scheme as broad as LEADER is difficult. It is something that should however be reviewed as part of the development of any future scheme with several potential additional indicators suggested within this report.

Recommendation 2: Consideration should be given to the use of a more comprehensive set of performance indicators as part of any future scheme.

The strategy

The Local Development Strategy (LDS) is intended to provide a 'road-map' for how the funding available to the LAG is going to be used. The LDS developed by the Arwain Sir Benfro LAG was, intentionally, very broad, as is generally the case for LAGs across Wales. The rationale for such an approach is that it does not restrict the type of projects that can potentially be supported which, especially for a scheme intended to support projects that are developed from within the local community (or 'bottom-up'), is logical, as LAG members generally argued. However, such an approach provides little 'strategy' for the utilisation of the funding available. The themes of the scheme in Pembrokeshire have generally been used to provide guidance in how the LEADER funding can be used, rather than a means of prioritisation.

Again, we would not be critical of this approach. Whether or not it is a good thing is debatable depending on the way in which LEADER funding is going to be utilised. If the intention is to support 'grass-roots' projects as they emerge (which has been the focus in Pembrokeshire generally), the approach is the right one. However, it also means that the funding that is available is inevitably spread relatively thinly and across a wide range of largely independent projects as has also been the case in Pembrokeshire, as discussed further later. The alternative approach is obviously to be more focused, targeting the funding available and, potentially, seeking to support a set of more joined-up projects that can achieve a strategic goal. Such an approach however probably limits the range of organisations that can access the support available. Neither approach is 'wrong' with the key being to be clear about the approach that is being used, which would seem to have been the case in Pembrokeshire.

The Local Action Group

Attendance at LAG meetings was good; there were 26 LAG meetings over the lifetime of the scheme with 11 members attending each meeting on average. Seven members have attended 16 or more of the meetings suggesting that there has been good continuity over the period. This is important for any scheme where decisions are being made on an ongoing basis and there is a need to be aware of and understand decisions that have been made previously.

The evaluation has found that being a member of the Arwain Sir Benfro LAG has generated a range of benefits for the individuals concerned especially in terms of networking, developing new relationships, and becoming familiar with activities ongoing within the county. This is positive and is an important outcome of the LEADER approach which is as much about the process of managing and delivering the scheme as it is about the projects that have been supported.

It should be recognised that many LAG members are volunteers, and the scheme could not operate without their involvement. Identifying and maximising the benefit that they get because of their participation is therefore important. It is also a means of attracting members to the group.

Recommendation 3: Ways of maximising the benefits that LAG members gain because of becoming involved in LEADER should be explored as part of the development of any future scheme.

Views on the performance of the LAG including the quality of the discussions at meetings were generally positive. However, there have been concerns that the LAG has operated too much as a 'grants assessment panel' which need to be noted. If the LEADER approach is being effectively implemented, the role of the LAG should be much broader than to just consider applications for financial support. Their role should also include, for example, assessing the needs and opportunities in the area, networking with other LAGs, and reviewing what projects have achieved and lessons learnt. It is important that adequate attention is paid to those broader roles of the LAG.

Recommendation 4: The role of the LAG beyond the assessment of applications for financial support is an important part of the LEADER approach. This should be considered as part of the development of any future scheme in Pembrokeshire.

Animation and supporting applicants

Feedback from applicants on the support they received from the Arwain Sir Benfro team was good with no significant issues in respect of the application process identified which is clearly positive. A key reason for this would seem to be the role of PLANED who are able to draw on their extensive experience of working in Pembrokeshire and the local community in the delivery of their administrative role.

A key objective of the 'animation' element of the LEADER approach is to 'make things happen' and to draw individuals and groups into rural development for the first time. During a workshop with LAG members for this final phase of the evaluation, the success of the scheme in Pembrokeshire in that respect was highlighted. The mid-term evaluation report however found that, in many cases – although not all - those involved in managing and delivering projects supported by Arwain Sir Benfro had relevant, and sometimes substantial, previous experience.

It is important to note that this is not necessarily a bad thing with those with relevant experience being able to draw upon that experience while delivering their projects and to develop the new and innovative approaches that LEADER is seeking to support. It would however be wrong to suggest that a key outcome of LEADER in Pembrokeshire has been to support applicants getting involved in rural development for the first time although there are instances where this has been the case. Importantly, the vast majority of those involved in delivering projects did however say that their involvement with Arwain Sir Benfro had a positive influence on whether they would become involved in rural development projects in Pembrokeshire in the future. This is, again, an important positive outcome.

The animation element of the LEADER approach also provides resource to work with the local community and stakeholders to identify and develop projects. It would seem fair to say that, in the main, the work of the Arwain Sir Benfro team has been mainly reactive, responding to very high levels of demand for support across Pembrokeshire. Again, we would not be overly critical of this approach given the high levels of demand for support and examples of a more pro-active approach were given during discussions on this matter such as work with the local young farmers groups. However, the potential to have been more pro-active seems clear. The risk that some groups from within the community may not get the opportunity to develop ideas and submit applications for support in a highly competitive environment where those with substantial experience in the field of rural development are applying for funding also needs to be considered.

Recommendation 5: Ways in which the animation team could be more pro-active working to develop projects with groups from within the local community who are under-represented in the applications for support being received should be explored as part of the development of any future scheme. The potential to ringfence a proportion of funding to support projects developed by those with no previous experience in delivering rural development projects in the area should also be explored.

Cooperation

Only four cooperative projects have formed part of the LEADER scheme in Pembrokeshire; levels of cooperation with LAGs and officers from other parts of Wales or indeed across Europe have not therefore been substantial. This is a considerable missed opportunity, especially in respect of the opportunity to cooperate with LAGs from other parts of Europe given that this is the last iteration of the LEADER programme in Wales because of the UK's exit from the European Union.

A key reason for the lack of cooperation would seem to be a lack of time on the part of officers to work with their counterparts in other areas to develop such projects. This is clearly something that we can understand, especially given the high demand for support from within Pembrokeshire which dominated the time of officers. Nevertheless, cooperation is a key feature of the LEADER approach which can generate substantial benefits in terms of learning from other areas and so on.

Recommendation 6: There should be a greater focus on developing cooperative projects with other LAGs as part of any future scheme (assuming that such an opportunity is part of any such scheme).

Innovation

There has clearly been an emphasis on supporting pilot and innovative projects as part of the Arwain Sir Benfro scheme with several the projects supported being clearly innovative. However, there is an argument that it may have been appropriate to have a greater focus on activity which are more clearly innovative as part of the scheme. There is a link between this issue and the previous discussion about the potential for a more proactive approach on the part of those working with groups and communities to develop projects. We would argue that one of the areas where the team could potentially have been more pro-active was in supporting stakeholders and groups to use creative problem-solving techniques, for example, to develop new and innovative approaches to realise opportunities or tackle long-standing issues. One of the problems of a reactive approach is that it assumes that new and innovative ideas and project proposals exist in the local area, which may not be the case, especially amongst groups and communities with less experience in engaging in rural development activities.

Recommendation 7: The possibility of ring-fencing a proportion of funding to support especially innovative ideas and projects should be explored as part of any future scheme as a means of 'pushing the boundaries' in terms of the level of innovation within the scheme. The potential to develop a programme of support for local communities to think creatively and develop new and innovative solutions should also be explored, to be delivered as part of future animation activities (see Recommendation 5).

There is also a tendency within LEADER (not just in Pembrokeshire) to treat projects being supported as 'one-off' pilots, which once completed are either mainstreamed or not. Innovation is however often an ongoing process with ideas going through several iterations and pilots before they are mainstreamed. The potential need to revisit ideas and projects that have already been funded by LEADER to consider the need to support a further iteration of the pilot should therefore be considered, although that would never seem to be discussed with the emphasis on supporting applications received. This is linked to the previous discussion about the role of the LAG and the concern that it operates too much as a grants assessment panel.

Recommendation 8: Some pilot projects warrant a second attempt or further development. As part of any future scheme, alongside the consideration of new project ideas and applications, the LAG should, on an ongoing basis, review project evaluation forms with a view to considering whether existing or previous pilot projects should be evolved (or combined with other pilots) into new or phase 2 pilots.

Completing the cycle: capturing and sharing lessons learnt

The importance of completing the 'innovation cycle' for projects needs to be emphasised which should include a comprehensive analysis of lessons learnt, etc. as well as the effective dissemination and sharing of that information. LAG members were not clear about the outcomes of projects that had been supported, suggesting that more could have been done to capture and share information in this regard. We would argue that the value of investing £5 million on the implementation of new and innovative project ideas is only truly realised if the lessons learnt are effectively captured and then shared.

There is also a concern that the lessons learnt from the current scheme will be lost, especially if there is a gap before any successor scheme is introduced, which is inevitable given the lack of clarity on the matter at the time of writing.

Recommendation 9: The 'innovation cycle' should include a review of what has been achieved, lessons learnt, and so on. There should be a greater emphasis on these elements as part of any future scheme (linked to Recommendation 8) with projects reviewed as they near completion and discussions on these issues at LAG meetings.

Recommendation 10: Consideration should be given to the development and sharing of a compendium of 'learning' from the Arwain Sir Benfro scheme. Such a resource could then be used if and when a future scheme is being developed in Pembrokeshire and ensure that the lessons learnt from the current scheme are not lost.

Achievements of the projects supported

Turning our attention to the projects that have been supported, as previously stated, Arwain Sir Benfro has clearly succeeded in supporting a wide range of projects and activities. Feasibility studies have been a clear feature of the scheme with tourism, heritage, and cultural prominent in terms of the sectors where projects have been active. Projects have delivered a range of services including food poverty, child poverty, health & wellbeing, eco-therapy, climate change and tackling isolation and loneliness. As well as funding numerous studies, Arwain Sir Benfro funding was used to employ staff to support the development and delivery of activities which is a direct route of building capacity within the organisations in question. There has been a clear emphasis on making the best possible use of the resources and characteristics of Pembrokeshire, particularly in respect of the renewable energy theme.

It is difficult to argue that the range of projects supported has achieved any of the ambitions or objectives set out with the LDS. Rather, they are a collection of projects working in the themes identified within the LDS. Also, as previously noted, there is no clear links between most of the projects and no strategy in terms of the projects supported. The focus being on providing funding that allowed local groups and organisations to pilot new and innovative approaches in a range of different themes and areas. The difference the scheme has tried to make is to give local groups and organisations to test or try something new.

Most projects felt that that it was at least unlikely that their project would have progressed (or at least, not progressed as quickly or in the same way), without the support they received. This is important in terms of the added value of the Arwain Sir Benfro scheme.

Several themes were apparent when projects described what they had achieved: confirming the viability of an idea (or not), developing skills & abilities, increasing collaboration, strengthening relationships, disseminating information, directly improving people's lives, enhancing the local area, and created employment opportunities. These are positive and important outcomes generated by the projects supported.

The key outcome for a LEADER scheme is however perhaps the legacy of the projects that have been funded. What has happened since the LEADER support came to an end? The evaluation has found positive outcomes in that respect. In particular, several projects have been able to secure significant amounts of funding as follow-ons to the pilot activities and/or feasibility studies supported by Arwain Sir Benfro, with a total more than £2.5 million. This is a significant and positive outcome for the Arwain Sir Benfro scheme and demonstrates the value of this type of intervention.

Appendix 1: Performance indicators definitions

Indicator	Definition
Number of feasibility studies	Number of specific feasibility studies commissioned or undertaken through the programme to provide the background research for a specific problem or issue and the production of a comprehensive written appraisal of the issues, the alternative solutions, the financial costings, a detailed risk analysis and recommendations for the next steps.
Number of networks established	Number of formal networks that have been created as a direct result of the LEADER programme and were not in existence prior to programme involvement. (Each network can be scored only once over the life of the approved programme).
Number of jobs safeguarded through supported projects	Jobs safeguarded are where jobs are known to be at risk over the next 12 months. Jobs should be scored as FTE and permanent (a seasonal job may be scored provided the job is expected to recur indefinitely; the proportion of the year worked should also be recorded). The job itself should be scored, not an estimate of how many people may occupy the job. If the job is not full-time then the hours per week will need to be divided by 30 to find the proportion of what FTE represents (e.g., 18 hours per week would be 0.6 FTE).
Number of pilot activities undertaken/supported	Number of pilot activities undertaken/supported through the capacity building activities, broken down as: new approaches, new products, new processes, new services.
Number of community hubs	The number of new community hubs that were formed as a direct result of the LEADER programme.
Number of information dissemination actions/ promotional and/or marketing activities to raise awareness of the LDS and/or it's projects	<p>The number of actions undertaken by the Local Action Group to raise awareness and explain the aim objectives and activities undertaken via the Local Development Strategy to the rural population.</p> <p>The number of planned and targeted activities undertaken by the Local Action Group that promote the Local Development Strategy and its projects OR the production and distribution of materials aimed at marketing and promoting the Local Development Strategy and its projects.</p>

Indicator	Definition
Number of stakeholders engaged	<p>Stakeholder: Any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the project objectives. These can be people, groups or entities that have a role and interest in the objectives and implementation of a project. They include the community whose situation the project or programme seeks to change.</p> <p>Engagement: Stakeholders who become actively involved in the project's implementation at any stage.</p>
Number of participants supported	<p>Participants: number of people who attend an event to disseminate information, etc. Please note that the number on receipt of any kind of mailshot associated with the dissemination of information (e.g., the distribution of a report summary) cannot be counted as participants.</p>

Appendix 2: Potential additional performance indicators

The mid-term evaluation report considered the potential to introduce additional indicators to provide further data on the performance of the programme in Pembrokeshire for review as part of the final phase of the evaluation. The discussion is revisited below as it remains applicable and should be considered as part of discussions about any future LEADER or similar scheme in Pembrokeshire.

A key challenge to the evaluation of a programme such as LEADER is that the projects and activities funded vary substantially as discussed in this report. This makes it challenging to develop a set of common indicators that can be used across all projects, especially in respects of capturing the outcomes of activities. Potential generic indicators that could be used however include:

- The number of organisations applying for funding to deliver a regeneration project for the first time
- The number of those new organisations developing other or follow up project proposals (i.e., continuing their involvement in regeneration)
- The number (or percentage) of participants/stakeholders reporting that they have benefited because of their involvement in the project funded by LEADER
- The number (or percentage) of participants/stakeholders reporting that they are more likely to get involved or continue to be involved in actions within their local community because of their involvement with the LEADER programme.

The main weakness of these indicators is that they tell you nothing about the nature of the benefit, only that there has been one. It may however be that such an indication is enough with more detailed data and analysis being provided at a project level.

A common theme in discussions with LAG members on this issue at the mid-term stage of the evaluation was the legacy of projects, whether they continue or evolve once the funding that has been provided by the LEADER programme has come to an end. This was considered by many to be perhaps the key indicator of the success of LEADER and is obviously consistent with the core objective of LEADER as a mechanism for piloting new and innovative approaches to rural development in Pembrokeshire.

Whilst accepting that not all projects will succeed is important (a key part of any intervention in support of new and innovative activities) the logic of indicators relating to legacy for a LEADER programme is clear. Potential indicators include:

- The number of projects still active 12 months post the end of the LEADER funding
- The amount of additional or funding drawn into Pembrokeshire by the project.

Sharing of learning is also a key element of the LEADER programme. It may therefore be valuable to capture indicators of activities relating to that process as part of any set of 'legacy' indicators. For example:

- The number of case studies produced and the number of times they have been downloaded from the programme website
- Participants in activities to share learning from the LEADER programme (individuals and/or organisations).

As discussed in Report 1, Common Evaluation Questions (CEQs) are an important element of the EU Common Monitoring and Evaluation System of which the LEADER programme forms part, and it is appropriate to consider them here. LAGs are required to report against the CEQs which are relevant to the Focus Areas their activities are aligned to. In Wales, all LAGs should address the CEQ related to Focus Area 6B: *'To what extent has the RDP intervention contributed to fostering local development in rural areas?'* The judgement criteria specified for this question are set out in the table below.

Table A2.1: Judgement criteria and indicators for Focus Area 6B: fostering local development in rural areas

Judgement criteria	Indicators
1. Services and local infrastructure in rural areas has improved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of rural population covered by local development strategies
2. Access to services and local infrastructure has increased in rural areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jobs created in supported projects • Percentage of rural population benefiting from improved services/infrastructures
3. Rural people have participated in local actions	
4. Rural people have benefited from local actions	<i>Additional information:</i>
5. Employment opportunities have been created via local development strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of projects/initiatives supported by the Local Development Strategy
6. Rural territory and population covered by LAGs has increased	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of RDP expenditure in LEADER measures with respect to total RDP expenditure

The indicators specified for Focus Area 6B are of relatively limited value at a local level in terms of assessing the outcomes of the programme. Many of the indicators suggested above are however, relevant to the judgement criteria specified further supporting their potential introduction. The constraints created by the state aid restriction on the programme in Wales on the potential to achieve the 'jobs created' result does however need to be noted again here.

It is also important to consider the Well-being of Future Generations Act when considering programme level performance indicators for schemes in Wales. The Act puts in place legislation requiring public bodies in Wales to put long-term sustainability at the forefront of their thinking, and work with each other along with other relevant organisations (such as third sector groups) and the public to prevent and tackle problems⁹. Seven 'well-being goals' are set and a series of 46 'national indicators' have been put in place to allow progress towards those goals to be measured. The list is too long to include here¹⁰ but several of the indicators are potentially relevant to the LEADER programme in Pembrokeshire.

These indicators are however (as one would expect from national level indicators) very high level and long-term. Attributing any changes in these indicators to the LEADER programme will therefore be challenging to say the least. Being aware of these high-level indicators and considering them within the revision of the LDS will, however, be important.

Based on the review in this section, we would propose that the introduction of at least the indicators noted below be considered:

- a) The number of organisations applying for funding to deliver a regeneration project for the first time
- b) The number of those new organisations developing other or follow up project proposals (i.e., continuing their involvement in regeneration)
- c) The number (or percentage) of participants/stakeholders reporting that they are more likely to get involved or continue to be involved in actions within their local community because of their involvement with the LEADER programme
- d) The number of projects still active 12 months post the end of the LEADER funding
- e) The amount of additional or funding drawn into Pembrokeshire by the project
- f) Participants in activities to share learning from the LEADER programme (individuals and/or organisations).

These indicators are generic and not priority specific. Based on the review of the LDS previously discussed, the potential to introduce additional priority specific indicators should also be considered.

⁹ More information about the Act is available here: <https://futuregenerations.wales/about-us/future-generations-act/>

¹⁰ The full list can be found within this document: <https://gov.wales/docs/desh/publications/160316-national-indicators-to-be-laid-before-nafw-en.pdf>