

The Wool Towns

The Local Development Strategy for A Proposed LEADER Area September 2014



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Executive Summary

The Wool Towns LEADER Area is made up of a small number of market towns, many dispersed rural small villages and wooded arable countryside. Infrastructure is limited making services hard to deliver and rural isolation is a key issue. There is a high predominance of micro and SME businesses that are particularly linked to the agricultural, food and tourism sectors.

The area is historically linked to medieval times when the Essex and Suffolk Wool Towns were powerful economic drivers and among the wealthiest in the country. The legacy of this is a unique heritage asset that defines this part of the country and bonds the area into the potential of a strong brand for visitors around the world. Today the Wool Towns are still economic hubs playing an important role in supporting the wider rural economy.

The Wool Towns is a new LEADER area and was borne by the outcome of consultation events regarding Community Led Local Development (CLLD). These provided significant interest and support for the development of a LEADER programme in this area. Subsequent work in developing the strategy has brought together a strong partnership otherwise who would never have collaborated.

The Wool Towns LEADER Programme in summary intends to provide the opportunities, by 2020, to achieve a vibrant, self-sustaining and diverse rural economy that builds on the Wool Town's unique sense of place and community that is characterised by the rich cultural heritage and pastoral landscape in the form of river valleys, ancient woodland and iconic settlements that are woven across the open farmed countryside.

Its key priorities are to promote the sustainable economic growth of rural businesses in the Wool Towns LEADER Area; maintain and improve the range of quality services and ensure access to them and promote sustainable management of natural resources, integrating social, economic and social needs.

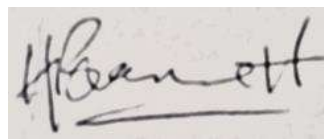
The Wool Towns Local Action Group wishes to support small and micro rural businesses to grow so that they create more employment opportunities in the rural area. It aims to utilise its indicative midpoint grant budget of just over **£2.018million** to be matched with private sector funding to give a total investment of over **£4.8 million in local projects by 2020**.

The headline targets for 2020 are to **create at least 76 jobs**, support **136 rural businesses** and **5 community actions** and **increase overnight stays by 11,700** per annum. The LDS also envisages bringing realistically **212 hectares** of existing woodland back into management and to support the delivery of an additional **9836 green tonnes** of wood fuel over five years.

Signatures:



Fran Bedding
Accountable Body



Harry Barnett
Chair of LAG

1 The Local Action Group Partnership

1.1 Membership

The proposed structure and membership of the Wool Towns Local Action Group (WT LAG) has been established in accordance with RDPE guidelines. Membership of WT LAG is open to all organisations and individuals who are based or operate in the LAG area and who can contribute to the aims and objectives of the Partnership.

During the development of the Local Development Strategy (LDS) participants who have been involved in the consultation processes have volunteered to become members of the proposed WT LAG. Currently the LAG Partnership totals **34** members of whom 25 are from the private and voluntary sectors. The LAG will be chaired by Harry Barnett.

The Shadow LAG has met formally on six occasions (2nd December 2013; 7th March 2014, 30th April 2014, 20th May 2014, 16th July 2014 & 18th August 2014)¹. In addition a launch and two consultation events were held (28th May, 16th June & 30th June 2014). One to one consultations have taken place with the South East LEP (SELEP) and New Anglia LEP (NALEP) and the NFU, CLA, Forestry Commission, Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Project and Essex Chamber of Commerce. The members named below have agreed to serve on the LAG for the duration of the programme. It is balanced in respect of private and public sector membership, business sector interests and gender.

Chair Harry Barnett (elected on 18th August 2014): private sector

Private and voluntary sector members are (25 in total): Harry Barnett (Water Farm Partnership), Suzanne Harris (Rural Community Council of Essex (RCCE)), George Courtauld (Farmer), Roy Whitworth (Lavenham Parish Council), Ashley Seabourne (Green Light Trust), Sue Sida Lockett (Lockett Farms & Stratford Hills Livery Stables), Archie Ruggles-Brise (Spains Hall), Tracey Loynds (South Suffolk Leisure), Dave Hedges (RSPB), Adam Scott (Farmer), Craig Finbow (Owls Hall), Gifford Lewis (Long Melford PC), John Dodgson (Rural Property Advisor), Rob Morrell (NFU), Sean Garnham (Rural retailer), Simon Nott (Farmer) Thomas Philp (Farmer), Tony Evans (Farmer), Will Gray (Savills), Liz Storey (Ignite Business Enterprise), Claire Wright (CLA), Alasdair Rhind (NALEP), Hannah Bradley (Community Action Suffolk), Christine Luxton (Suffolk Wildlife Trust) Antony Flower (Farmer)

Public sector members are (9 in total): Graeme Lockey (West Suffolk Councils), Simon Maidment (Essex County Council), Peter Smith (Braintree DC) Simon Amstutz (Dedham Vale AONB) Dave Benham (Mid Suffolk & Babergh DC), Peter Stevens (St Edmundsbury BC), Andy Cuthbertson (Suffolk County Council), Nigel Chapman (District Council member), James Finch (County Council Member).

LAG Advisers: Corinne Meakins (Forestry Commission).

The LAG recognises that some members may change role or need to leave the LAG before 2020 and therefore the LAG and Accountable Body will continue to promote LAG membership so that additional members can be recruited if needed. Public sector membership, including from the accountable body, will not exceed 50%. The membership will reflect the interests and priorities of the LDS and there will be a reasonable gender balance. Within these limits, individuals may nominate themselves or others for membership.

¹ The Accountable Body holds all minutes to these meetings

1.2 Structure and Decision-making Process

The LAG has agreed to **adopt a single committee structure** whereby all members of the LAG will form the project approvals panel as well helping to set and update the LDS. To be quorate 30% of the members must be present with a majority of those present being from the private sector members. The Accountable Body officers will not be eligible to vote on project proposals, but will be at every LAG meeting to present project proposals, answer questions on the project proposals and project appraisals, keep minutes and to inform members about the LAG budget position. These staff will assist LAG members in reaching decisions by ensuring that the decisions are supported by full information, but will remain impartial and have no role in the decision making.

The **LAG chair**, or their nominee drawn from the LAG membership, will chair all meetings of the LAG and ensure that members are given the opportunity to debate applications fully before making decisions on which projects to support. The Chair will also be responsible, with the accountable body, for ensuring that correct procedures are followed, all decisions are transparent and robust, non discriminatory procedures are adopted and for ruling on any potential conflicts of interest. All decisions made by the LAG will be binding on all members and be arrived at by simple majority when moved to a vote.

Where minor changes to a project are required before it can be approved, the LAG may decide to allow this extra information to be considered between formal meetings of the LAG either by email circulation to all LAG members or through Chair's action.

The **role of LAG members** is to: ensure that the LDS is kept refreshed and sets a clear direction for the Wool Towns area; to consider project proposals brought forward to it and to recommend for funding those which will deliver clear benefits to the area in line with the LDS; assist in the promotion of the Wool Towns programme in the local area.

The **accountable body** is responsible for the delivery of the programme on behalf of LAG members, DEFRA, the RPA and the EU. It will provide the administrative support and guidance to ensure that all programme requirements are adhered to, promote the programme to potential projects locally and support projects in making applications. It will provide the local oversight, monitoring and evaluation of approved projects so that DEFRA, the RPA and the EU can have confidence in the claims submitted for grant funding.

The Wool Towns LAG will **meet at least quarterly** and all of its decisions will be fully minuted. Given the commercial nature of the project proposals LAG members will be obliged to ensure that all LAG paperwork is kept confidential at all times. Publicity materials and case studies on successful projects will be agreed by the LAG.

All members of the LAG will also be required to abide by the Behavioural Code of Conduct set out in the National Delivery Framework and to declare any conflicts of interest which may arise when considering project applications (this will be reviewed by the LAG at its first full meeting and adopt the procedures for dealing with Conflicts of Interest developed by the RDT East team in the previous LEADER programme).

1.3 Local Action Group staff, numbers and job descriptions

The Wool Towns LEADER staff will be employed by **Suffolk County Council** who will act as their Accountable Body. It is proposed to employ 1 part- time Programme Manager (0.1 FTE), 1 full time

Facilitator and 1 part time Programme Administrator (0.5 FTE) to support the work of the Local Action Group. It is the intention to share “back office services” between the Wool Towns & Heritage Coast LEADER Groups. Therefore 1 FTE Administrator will be employed to manage the administration functions across the 2 LAGs, to reduce costs, encourage a team working environment to support the LAGs and to provide cover during periods of holiday or training. In discussion with Essex Rivers and Eastern Plateau this may be broadened to include these two LAGs in this arrangement which would increase the admin support to 2 FTEs across the 4 LAG areas. The Accountable Body has in place an action plan that will, with effect of programme approval from Defra, begin the process of employment, LAG training and office set up. It also holds the full job descriptions of the roles.

There are four key roles that will need to be delivered by the LAG Team to ensure successful delivery of the programme:

- **Facilitator and animator** - The Programme Manager (PM) will oversee the management of the LAG and ensures that it complies with all relevant roles and obligations. The Facilitator will have day-to-day responsibility for the delivery of the programme. The Facilitator will be the outward facing post promoting, facilitating and helping potential applicants develop successful project ideas.
- **Project Appraisal** – Projects cannot be appraised by the member of the team who has supported applicants. Therefore this role will either be carried out by the facilitator from the Heritage Coast LAG or if a SLA is in place with Eastern Plateau and Essex Rivers LAGs then to use their facilitators. If the numbers of applications rise substantially and there are insufficient resources to deliver this work the LAG may contract in additional appraisers.
- **Administrative Functions** – There will be a need to manage and monitor the claims process and project delivery to ensure that all records and claims comply with Defra and RPA requirements. The PM will be responsible overall for papers etc being ready for the LAG meeting. The Administrator will also ensure all papers are with the LAG members in advance of LAG meetings and will take minutes of all meetings. This role will be carried out by the Programme Administrator who will work across the other linked LAGs.
- **Internal Audit** – There is a requirement that an internal audit function is required within the Accountable Body. This will be carried out by Suffolk County Council, the Accountable Body.

1.4 Equal Opportunities Statement

The Wool Towns LAG and SCC² as the Accountable Body will ensure that the duties imposed by the Equalities Act³ are followed. This will apply both to the conduct of the LAG itself as well as ensuring that projects supported by Wool Towns LAG also deliver their responsibilities on equality. The equality duty sets down three aims:

- To eliminate unlawful discrimination;
- To advance equality of opportunity;
- To foster good relations.

These aims are applied to ‘protected characteristics’ which cover: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation.

² <http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/your-council/plans-and-policies/equalities-and-inclusion/equalities-and-inclusion-our-commitment-to-you/>

³ Government Equalities Office (2011), Equality Act 2010: public sector equality duty

The Accountable Body will ensure that when dealing with applicants that they clearly understand their equality responsibilities, build meeting these responsibilities into project appraisal and advise the LAG accordingly if any aspect of the application gives rise to risks or concerns on equality so that informed decisions can be made.

1.5 Community involvement and consultation undertaken

In developing and drafting the Local Development Strategy a number of consultation events have taken place across the WT LEADER Area. These have been attended by **62 individuals and organisations**⁴. Those involved have included farmers, rural micro and small businesses, tourism representatives, larger companies, NFU, CLA, RSPB, community groups, individuals; councillors; councils; representatives from the private, voluntary and public sector who have all been fully engaged with the process. Close working links have been formed with the NFU, CLA, the Easton and Otley Agricultural College and Farmer Groups who have all helped in promoting the development of the Local Development Strategy and have engaged - and encouraged successfully their members – in the process. They have been **involved and fully engaged** with the process, **contributing at consultation meetings** to develop the Vision, Priorities, Objectives, Activities and Outputs in facilitated sessions. They have been sent iterative and final stages of the document during its drafting phase for comment and consultation.

Suffolk County Council have steered the development of the strategy and chaired the initial “Shadow” LAG meetings. The **Shadow LAG has met six times** during the process and has held two half day consultation events. A **joint launch to the process** was held at the Suffolk County Show in May 2014 which was well attended. Two previous meetings were held in 2013 to discuss CLLD and LEADER opportunities⁵.

In drafting the LDS the key partners and stakeholders **most recent strategic plans** have been scrutinised in order to ensure that the **local area’s key priorities are reflected in this strategy**. Much of the evidence base in the following section has references against relevant local plans.

Letters of support for the proposed LEADER Programme have been received from New Anglia LEP; South East LEP; the Greater Cambridge Greater Peterborough Enterprise Partnership (as attached to this LDS). Further support has come from the Regional NFU offices, Greenstead Green and District Agricultural Club, Community Action Suffolk, Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley project and farmers from within the area. All letters held with the Accountable Body.

1.6 Training requirements

The proposed membership of the LAG includes a good representation of members from a variety of businesses, voluntary and public sector backgrounds. All LAG members will be offered training at an early stage to assist in developing skills and to inform them of procedures for appraisal and decision-making.

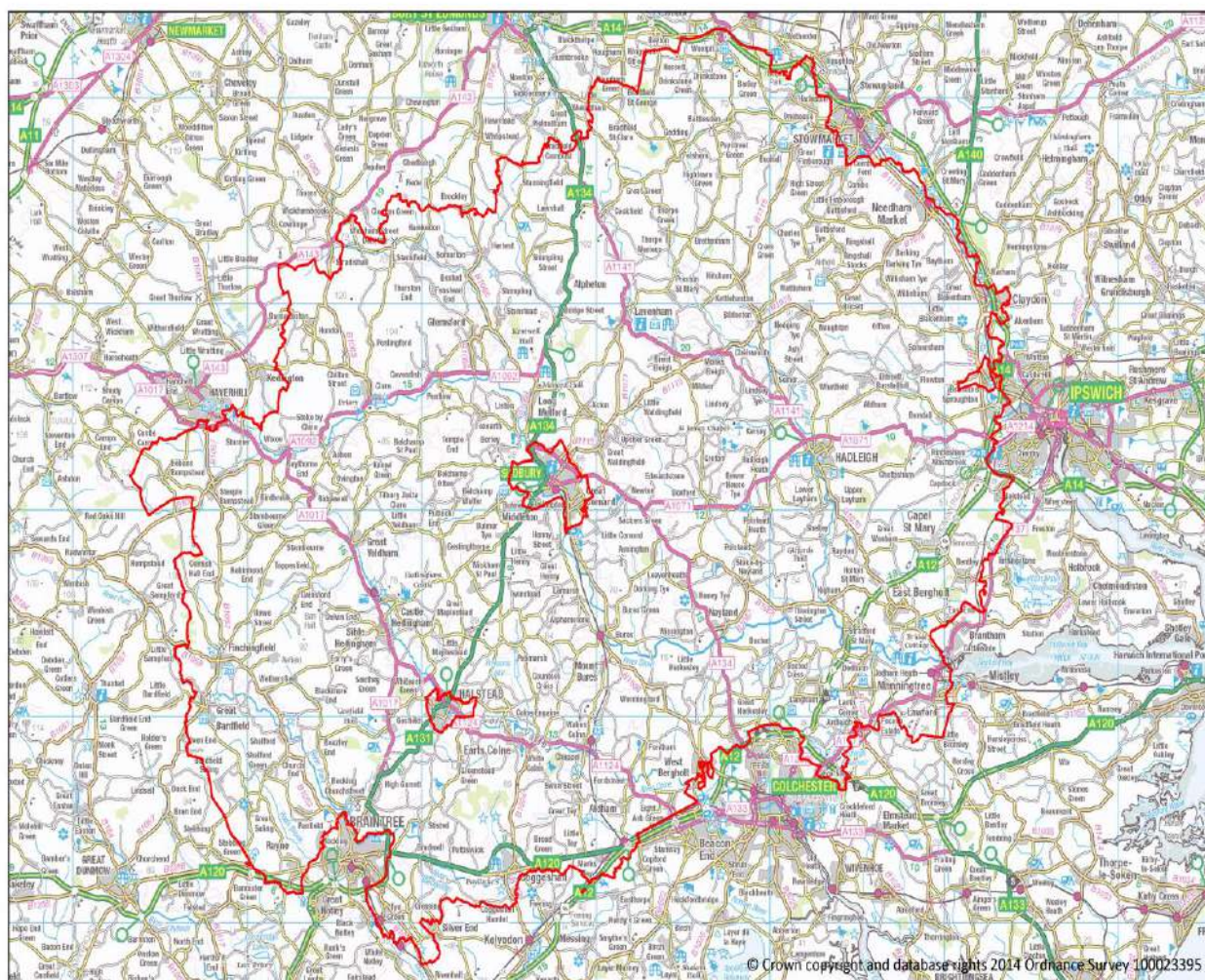
Training needs will be reviewed annually and training development will be planned as appropriate on a group basis – to take place on the same day as LAG meetings after business has been completed. Provision will be made to include the LAG Members of the Heritage Coast LEADER Area to partake in the training.

⁴ The Accountable Body holds the full list of attendees to all the events

⁵ The Accountable Body holds the full list of attendees at all these meetings and events

2 The Wool Towns LEADER Area

2.1 Map of the area



2.2 Rural population

Table 1: Rural Population of Area

County	District	Population	% of LAG Population
Suffolk	Babergh	51,349	34.3
	Mid Suffolk	21,762	14.5
	St.Edmundsbury	7,392	4.9
Essex	Braintree	47,139	31.4
	Colchester	16,887	11.3
	Tendring	5,344	3.6
Grand Total		149,873	100

Source ONS

The Wool Towns LEADER area population is 149,873. The four key districts are Babergh, Mid Suffolk, Braintree and Colchester together form 91.5% of the area's total population. Mid Suffolk⁶ and Braintree⁷ are the two most rural districts of their counties. Population is predicted to rise by 6% between 2012 and 2022 in Suffolk and 8% in Essex; across the four LEADER districts population is expected to increase over the same period by 8%.⁸

The LAG area has an **ageing population**. By 2022, across the area, predictions suggest that numbers of those aged between 40 and 45 years will have fallen by 16%, however those between 75 and 80 years is expected to rise by 35%; impacting on already stretched services and economic development and growth of the area.

Table 2: Population Change in The Wool Towns

Council Area	% change 40-45 yrs age group 2012-2022	% Change 75-79 yrs age group 2012-2022
Suffolk	-19%	33%
Essex	-12%	31%
Overall LAG Area (All districts)	-16%	35%
• Mid Suffolk	-17%	33%
• Babergh	-20%	33%
• St Edmundsbury	-14%	33%
• Braintree	-10%	38%
• Colchester	-8%	38%
• Tendring	-29%	30%

Source ONS 2012- based subnational population projections

2.3 The Wool Towns Area

2.3.1 Environmental Profile

The Wool Towns **landscape** is characterised by an undulating chalky boulder clay plateau that is dissected by numerous river valleys that form gentle slopes in the lower, wider valleys and steeper slopes in the narrower upper parts. The extensive large-scale views across the plateau provide a sense of openness. The tranquil river valleys represent the epitome of lowland English countryside character especially along the River Stour, where the famed Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and Stour Valley Project landscape provides a **rural sense of place**. The areas **mix of habitat types** provides **local distinctiveness**. Woodlands are linked by large hedgerows and provide wooded horizons. The north east part of the area flows seamlessly into the flatter and more open South Norfolk. To the north-west of the area the land abuts the dry, open landscape of the Brecks.⁹

The variable topography of rolling hills and gentle valleys and the combination of features – trees, river bank willows, flood plain meadow, ancient lanes, traditional villages and farm buildings and the meandering rivers – produce a classic English lowland character that is quite distinct from the rest of Suffolk and Essex and provides a distinct sense of place. Changes to agricultural practices and the growth of villages have altered the landscape but not fundamentally changed it.

⁶ Transforming Suffolk; Suffolk's Community Strategy 2008-2028 Suffolk Strategic Partnership

⁷ Essex Economic Assessment: Local Assessments

⁸ ONS 2014

⁹ Natural England National Character Area profile: South Suffolk & North Essex Claylands

The **heritage** of the area is important to the development and cohesiveness of the LEADER area. The area has always been predominantly agricultural however from the 13th century for six hundred years south-western Suffolk, with the adjoining part of north Essex, was a major industrial region specialising in the production of woollen cloth. The emergence of this part of country as an important area for textile industry was due to it predominating with pastoral areas, when population levels were high and freely owned smallholdings were commonplace. The wealth then generated has left a clear mark on many of the area's perpendicular parish churches, guildhalls and timber-framed domestic buildings **forming iconic settlements across the 21st Century landscape**.¹⁰ Thus the area is known as "The Wool Towns Area".

The Dedham Vale AONB & Stour Valley Project is a farmed landscape with strong associations with England's finest landscape artist, John Constable RA. This nationally protected landscape is one of just 34 such protected landscapes wholly in England and is characterised by its picturesque villages, rolling farmland, rivers, meadows, ancient woodlands and a wide variety of local wildlife. The combination of landscape features, in a working landscape, creates what many describe as the quintessential English lowland landscape.

Farming is the key driver in landscape management of the area. Many of the key landscape features in the AONB and Stour Valley, such as hedgerows, meadows and woodlands are dependent on input from the farming community which makes a key contribution to the local economy. The generation of income from farming operations allows many of those farming the land to conserve and enhance biodiversity habitats and landscape features¹¹.

Approximately 6% of the area contains woodland; of that 35% is ancient woodland which is mainly found in small woodland parcels and a large proportion is under managed. There is potential for LEADER to support landowners to develop collaborative wood fuel initiatives and also to provide a tourism offer by opening up the woodlands to the public. Within the Stour Valley and Colne Valley, the main impression is of modern blocks of cricket-bat willows and poplars planted on the valley floor and sides.

Across the LAG area there are in total 9,394 ha of woodland of which 5,289ha (56%) are **undermanaged**. By comparison in Suffolk there are 15,700 ha (44%) of undermanaged woodland and across England 49%. Only 6% of the total area across the LAG area is not in public ownership. The Forestry Commission have estimated that if 661 ha of undermanaged woodland is brought under management over the next five years this will bring an additional timber volume into the market by 30,663 green tonnes which would equate directly to creating just under 2 FTEs. This figure only accounts for timber sold directly from the wood at stump. The increase in managed woodland would equate to 25,190 estimated carbon saved CO₂eq. However, the LAG believe that a realistic and achievable target across the area's dispersed and small woodlands would be to bring 212ha under management equating to 9,836 green tonnes.

The Forestry Commission ran a project accessing RDPE funds from the East of England during the 2007-13 programme, **Woodfuel East**. The purpose of the project was to bring an additional 110,000 green tonnes of round wood to market per annum as **woodfuel**, bringing 15,000 ha of undermanaged woodland into management. They aimed to achieve **carbon savings** of 80,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide. The project did not achieve the level of **job creation** that was expected. However, interviews with grant applicants undertaken by the project's external evaluators

¹⁰ Threads: A celebration of Suffolk Wool Towns: www.visitsuffolk.com/threads

¹¹ Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley – Management Plan 2010-2015

Sustainability East suggest that the Project's interventions have generated additional work in the woodfuel supply chain, and even though this has not as yet resulted in an increase in directly employed FTE posts, opportunities for self-employed contractors have increased.

In a sector that supports between 725-900 FTE jobs in the East of England, the increase of 36 FTEs (4-5%) achieved by Woodfuel East, although less than originally forecast, is still significant; the overall and long-term impact of Woodfuel East on rural employment in the forestry and wood fuel sectors is therefore more positive than the output figure suggests. Forestry contractors have also reported that the Project has enabled them to become more productive, expand into new markets and grow their businesses at a rate that would have not been possible without Woodfuel East's intervention. Many feel confident that their businesses will continue to grow, that jobs in their business were more secure, and there was an opportunity to create jobs in the future.¹²

There is also an identified need to **manage increasing wild deer numbers** to reduce their damaging impact on woodland condition and on agricultural yields and also to reduce road traffic accidents. In 2004 Defra estimated that the current wild deer population in the East of England was 76,000. Without improved management regime it is likely to increase at a rate of approximately 15% per annum. It is assumed that the current wild deer population in the region is approximately up to 400,000. This is not sustainable for the long term without a more managed approach of intervention¹³. In 2009 a similar survey as part of evidence to develop the RDPE **Wild Venison Project** in the East of England was carried out and it was suggested that the net damage that wild deer were causing to crops, traffic accidents and trees, woodland flora and wildlife habitats amounted to in terms of net cost to between £7.0 and £10.2 million per year across the East of England.¹⁴

The Wild Venison Project operated for three years and invested £580,000 of RDPE funding supporting 49 successful projects. Its aim was to provide an integrated approach to the delivery of sustainable land and woodland management through developing an infrastructure in the region to allow culled wild deer to be marketed to in the first instance to local food outlets and then direct to the end consumer. The project was a success, supporting 44 businesses and created 9.75 full-time equivalent direct jobs. The up and down stream jobs were not accounted for in the project evaluation but there will have been some wider benefit to the rural economy. Sales to venison outlets increased significantly, from an estimated 337 carcasses in 2009 to 2114 in 2013.

It is predicted that as a result of **climate change** the East of England will see winter rainfall increase by 30%, summer rainfall decrease by 45-60%. In the LAG Area this will affect the current crops grown, further **irrigation and water saving measures** may be needed to support agriculture amid in particular the top fruit sector of the industry. Conversely the additional rainfall may cause **flooding**, longer term or flash floods particularly in the river valleys. The boulder clay that is found in the area may also become impacted and difficult to work on as a result of more intense rainfalls and access key areas such as woodlands in need of winter management regimes.

2.3.2 Economic Profile

The economy base in the LAG area is largely agricultural with a range of small to medium sized businesses located in the larger villages and market towns¹⁵. The Area's economy is characterised

¹² Final Progress Report for Woodfuel East to 31st December 2013 - 13th February 2014

¹³ Defra: A Preliminary Estimate of the Cost of Damage Caused by Deer to Agriculture in England: 2003

¹⁴ Deer Initiative: The Final Report of the Wild Venison Project 2014

¹⁵ http://www.transformingsuffolk.co.uk/files/comm_strat/suffolkstrategic.pdf

by a **high proportion of small businesses**, with a tendency towards rural industries and activities, and dependence on declining manufacturing activities. Unemployment levels are low; average earnings in Suffolk are below the national and regional figures. Suffolk is one of the **lowest earning** counties in the country. Babergh has the second lowest average gross earnings in the county at £322.10 per week. In the Essex part of the area the average wage levels are just below the national average. Manufacturing and food processing are important employers in market towns and rural areas.¹⁶

The **key employment** sectors in Babergh and Mid Suffolk are advanced manufacturing, creative industries, and food, drink and agriculture. There is a higher proportion of employment in the food, drink and agriculture sector in these areas (4%) than across Suffolk as a whole (2.8%). This sector is particularly important in Mid Suffolk where it equates to around 6.5% of all employment. In the Essex areas the industries of agriculture, forestry and fishing are less significant than with their Suffolk neighbours¹⁷. Tourism is a key employer in the LAG area, accounting for around 8% of all employment in Suffolk and in the Essex part of the LAG area accounting for 7%.¹⁸

Local entrepreneurship is overwhelmingly **focussed on small and micro businesses**. Babergh & Mid Suffolk has a strong base with start up **businesses**, with a higher proportion of micro businesses (0-9 employees) than across Suffolk as a whole. In total they have 32% of all the businesses in Suffolk. The largest proportion of businesses in Babergh & Mid Suffolk falls within the agriculture, forestry and fishing sector, contributing to 4% of all employment in the area and the largest proportion of businesses; followed by construction, professional and scientific services, manufacturing and retail. Combined, these sectors account for more than 50% of all businesses in area. Almost **nine in every ten Braintree employers have fewer than ten employees** and there are no local businesses with over 200 staff. However, small firms often have limited access to funds for investment. This barrier can slow down innovation and business expansion.¹⁹

The economic base of the Area is weighted towards lower value-added activities, with lower potential for growth. This is reflected in lower productivity rates (in terms of GVA per head) compared to the national average. In Suffolk agriculture is more productive than English agriculture as a whole, with each worker producing output worth £84,000 against an English average of £53,000.²⁰ This translates into a profitability of £26,000 per employee in Suffolk compared to £12,000 for England as a whole²¹. This is due to the higher prevalence of crops and intensive livestock enterprises combined with relatively larger farms and mechanisation.

Agriculture utilises 84 per cent of the land area in the Area. Approximately 14% of the total farm holdings across the East of England are within the Wool Towns Area²². The soils are moderately fertile which alongside a reasonable climate support arable crops including, cereals, oilseed rape and sugar beet. However this makes it highly vulnerable to the global price volatility of commodity crops since the first price spikes in 2008. Pigs are a significant sector, with 21% of all pigs from the East of England to be found in the LAG area. Outdoor pig units are typical on the lighter soils in the north-east, while sheep with some cattle graze the valley pastures and wood pasture of estates

¹⁶ Suffolk's Growth Strategy: Suffolk County Council

¹⁷ ONS 2014

¹⁸ Essex County Council (2014), Essex Economic Plan ; Essex County Council (2012), Essex Growth Strategy ; Essex Rural Partnership (2011), Services in Rural Essex - summary report ; SELEP (2014), Growth Deal and Strategic Economic Plan.

¹⁹ <http://www.essex.gov.uk/SiteAssets/Pages/About-Essex/Appendix%202%20District%20Assessments%20for%20publication.pdf>

²⁰ Employee means farmers, partners and any directly employed staff, data from DEFRA (2012)

²¹ based on Total Income from Farming

²² 2010 Defra Ag Census

such as Ickworth. Fruit farms and orchards are also found on the lighter land. The Suffolk agricultural sector of the area derives 45% of turnover from arable, 15% from horticulture and 40% from livestock.

Between the period of 2007 and 2010 the amount of land farmed fell by 3%. The key drivers to this change are climate change with an increased risk in flooding and having to adapt different agricultural practices. Further is the demand for dwellings and the take up of land on the periphery of villages and towns.

The **strong and diverse agricultural sector** in Suffolk is amongst the top 6 counties in the UK by all major economic measures: output, GVA and profitability with the county ranked 4th in England for profitability. This is in excess of the 3.2% of England's agricultural land area in the county due to higher value enterprises and more intensive land use than across England as a whole, with comparatively little low economic output extensive grazing. Suffolk also only has approximately 2.8% of England's agricultural workforce at 8,200 directly employed people, which indicates a higher level of productivity amongst its workforce compared to most other counties²³. Between 2007 and 2010 there has been a fall in numbers of farmers of 5% - this is slightly above the East of England figure of 4% but in line with the English figure. Farms continue to shed workforce with a further reduction of just under 5% in the LAG Area over the 2007-2010 period²⁴. There is no current evidence to suggest the trend has reversed.

The area has a **large and growing food sector** based on both established and new food companies. National statistics show that for every £1 of GVA generated in agriculture a further £3 is generated by food processing, £1 by food wholesaling and £5 by food retail and catering²⁵. The inter-relationship between agriculture and the rest of the food chain is essential to its economic impact and research is increasingly interested in whole supply chain efficiency.

Across the area there is a **strong food processing sector** which is estimated to be worth over £500m in GVA representing 4.4-6.0% of English output and directly employing 9,650 staff²⁶. The relatively small resident population is a key determinant of the scale of the food retail and catering sector, however it is estimated as only representing 1.4% of the English market²⁷ - the same as its share of the country's population²⁸.

One aspect of the food market which has shown growth in recent years is the interest in **local provenance**, with arguably this trend being particularly strong in relation to tourism with visitors to rural areas. A thriving artisan and small producer base is closely linked to the ability of an area to promote a strong food culture, which is further promoted by the long established Tastes of Anglia the regional food speciality group.

Farming and food companies are increasingly dependent on other industries to provide up and downstream services such as wholesaling, machinery, haulage, analytical and consultancy, as well as being major purchasers of business services such as accountancy, legal advice and banking. The **economic success of the food chain** thus has a direct impact on a very large number of other companies in the area who would not traditionally have been seen as agriculture or food related.

²³ Suffolk Agri-food Research & Development Report November 2013; Martin Collison; Centre for Contemporary Agriculture

²⁴ 2010 Defra Ag Census

²⁵ DEFRA (2013), Agriculture in the UK 2012

²⁶ Improve Ltd (2010), The Food and Drink Manufacturing Industry in the East of England: Labour Market Information Profile 2009/10

²⁷ Whilst up to date local data is sparse, the limited evidence available suggests average per capita spend in Suffolk on food and drink is close to the national average and thus its share of population has been used as a proxy for its share of food and drink expenditure

²⁸ Census (2011)

Food, drink and agriculture are important to the area. Agriculture employs over 10,000 people and food and drink processing employs a further 9,000 people in Suffolk alone. Major employers include: Adnams, Greene King, Muntons, British Sugar and Birds Eye and from Essex: Maltsters Bairds Malt, Edme, Millers Marriages, ADM milling, Rank Hovis, Tiptree Jams. **Key producers from the LAG area** include Copella, Nestle Purina Pet Foods and Stourgarden Onions. The farm businesses from the LAG area are important members of the supply chain to these businesses. There is also particular potential for growth in the areas specialist food and drink offer, driven by national demand for high-quality, locally sourced food. Key constraints which may limit growth include the availability of technical and marketing skills, and water supplies.²⁹ The Greater Cambridge Greater Peterborough Enterprise Partnership (GCGP) has recognised the value of the industry and has introduced a grant scheme worth £3.2million to support the development of new and innovative ideas within the Agri-Tech sector. **Agri-Tech** is a multi-faceted sector. It includes agricultural research, seeds, agrochemicals, machinery, engineering and other inputs across arable and livestock agriculture, horticulture and food processing, packaging and retailing. This programme will invest in the development and commercialisation of agricultural research and development, SME and supply chain development generating employment, and essential skills development.³⁰

Rural Tourism has experienced strong growth in England in recent years, with new activities and experiences attracting domestic visitors. Rural trips have grown by roughly 1m a year since 2006, accounting for 22% of domestic leisure trips. Most day visitors come from their own area/region – in 2012: 77% of day visitors to the East came from the East, with 34% overnights also coming from the East.³¹

Tourism and culture are important employers across the Area. The **visitor economy** is worth over £1.75 billion annually to the Suffolk economy, providing nearly 30,000 jobs in 2,800 workplaces. Suffolk has a strong profile as a tourism destination including its heritage coast, **historical market towns and core villages of Sudbury, Long Melford and Lavenham, areas of natural beauty** including **the Dedham Vale AONB & Stour Valley Project** which falls in Essex as well, and other key tourist attractions. In Essex it is worth £2,989,594,150 and provides 42,189 FTEs which is the equivalent of 8% of the total employment in the county.³² The Wool Town LAG area's rural character makes it popular with tourists and day visitors, particularly the Stour Valley, which sits on the Suffolk–Essex border.

In economic terms the value of tourism to the Suffolk part of the Wool Towns LAG area in 2011 was £272,869,000. On average overnight stays spent £44/night compared to a national average of £58. The average day spend was £33. This sector employed 5,469 FTE which supported 22% of all FTE within the tourism sector across Suffolk. Including part time and seasonal working the numbers of people employed amounted to 7,600. In Mid Suffolk tourism represented 8% of the areas employment; across Babergh it represented 10%. Predominantly visitors came to the area for day trips only with only about 5% of visitors spending an overnight in the LAG area³³.

With an ageing population coupled with a baby boom over last 15 years families are looking for intergenerational family holidays. They want value holidays but they are increasing their domestic

²⁹ Suffolk's Growth Strategy: Suffolk County Council

³⁰ <http://www.gcgpc.co.uk/agri-tech-grants> <http://www.newanglia.co.uk/finance/research-and-development/agri-tech-growth-initiative/>

³¹ Rural Tourism Visit England 2013: England's Countryside: What are the opportunities?

³² The Economic Impact of the Essex Visitor Economy 2012: Cool Tourism

³³ Suffolk Value and Volume breakdown 2012

staycation holidays. There is now a heavier reliance on technology to book and check places to see. This is increasing especially from mobile devices. Environmental considerations have now moved to a more ethical outlook on holidays.

The more popular types of short breaks that tourists seek are those that include cycling, glamping and foodies (13 million day visits last year in Britain involved a trip to a food festival or farmers' market, and a further 26.2 million want to go to a food festival on the next holiday). Connecting with nature, wild walks etc are also proving popular with families.³⁴ **Outdoor recreation** is an important sector to the rural economy. In 2013, 42 million people in England visited the natural environment that equated to a total spend of £21 billion (£27/head)³⁵. It is suggested that "walking tourism" supports 245,500 FTEs and the "cycling economy" 23,000 direct FTEs.³⁶ The Mid Suffolk area has been judged to be one of the healthiest places to live in the country; therefore these are potential areas that the LAG may wish to direct support for tourism activities.

The Dedham Vale AONB & Stour Valley Project, in 2010 had 776,500 visitors of which 89% were day visits. The total value in economic terms that tourism generated to the area was **£46,408,911** in value and supported **980** tourism related jobs equating to 566 FTE jobs. The average spend per day visit was £29, lower than in Suffolk and the national average; the average spend for overnight visitors was £66.25/night. Across the Colchester District, that includes the Dedham Vale AONB & Stour Valley Project, in 2012 the total value of day visits spend in the countryside was £32,036,000 with an average daily spend in the rural community of £37. Food and drink accounted for 37% of the spend³⁷; tourists often want to purchase locally sourced products when on their trips which is beneficial for the rural economy and provides a target market for small businesses to develop and expand. In Braintree tourism contributed £40 million to the local economy and accounted for 4% of jobs³⁸

The area also has a **reputation for good quality food and drink**. In recent years, a significant and growing part of the food economy is the local quality food offer. This is closely linked to tourism, with many businesses emphasising local sourcing and it adds value and supports green economic growth. The brand of the Suffolk Trinity (Suffolk Punch horse, Black Faced Sheep and Red Poll cattle) that can all be found in the area plus genetic stock of old local fruit varieties including Red Miller's Seedling, St Edmunds Russet, Honey Pippin, Clopton Red, Maxton, Maclean's Favourite, Catherine, Suffolk Styles Pippin and Sturmer Pippin apples, and Coe's Golden Drop gage from the remnant traditional orchards provide an opportunity to add value and link local food with tourism further. Crapes Fruit Farm in Aldham has over 150 apple varieties

The most popular form of accommodation used in the AONB is serviced (B and B's and Hotels). The majority, 74%, of visitors to the area are on holiday; a further 15% are visiting on business; 83% of the spend in the area was made in the countryside rather than in towns. Most spend by staying visitors occurs in the accommodation and food and drink sectors, whilst day visitors spend most on food and drink and shopping³⁹.

³⁴ Domestic tourism leisure trends for next decade: Visit England 2013

³⁵ Natural England 2013

³⁶ The Economic Contribution of Outdoor Recreation: The Evidence", Sport and Recreation Alliance (2014)

³⁷ Economic Impact Research: The Economic Impact of the Essex Visitor Economy 2012; Produced on behalf of the COOL programme partners by The South West Research Company Ltd. January 2014

³⁸ <http://www.essex.gov.uk/SiteAssets/Pages/About-Essex/Appendix%202%20District%20Assessments%20for%20publication.pdf>

³⁹ Economic Impact of Tourism : Dedham Vale AONB 2010: Tourism South East

2.3.3 Social Profile

The Wool Towns LEADER Area is made up of a diverse economy. The area is experiencing rapid change and **significant development pressures** are affecting many of its rural areas. Many of the villages in the LAG area are in fact content with the size of their village and do not wish to see further growth, but would like additional localised services such as shops and public houses. Overall the East of England is characterised by a **growing rural population** which is **increasingly deriving its income from employment outside the traditional rural economy**, either by working in growing sectors of the economy such as financial services, commuting or by working remotely using ICT.

The area is largely rural with only one **small market** town (Hadleigh) that forms part of the LAG area. The market towns of Stowmarket, Halstead and Sudbury are excluded from the LEADER Area although they are recognised of their importance of providing services, employment and businesses and community service provision to their rural hinterlands and are classified as hub towns. There are smaller town and village settlements also associated with the area act as key hubs to the local populous such as Hadleigh, Sible & Castle Hedingham, Bures, Long Melford, Dedham, Coggeshall, Bocking and Needham Market. The rest of the area is made up of villages, some of which have a range of local facilities, but many people rely on Hadleigh, Sudbury, Halstead, Haverhill and Braintree or the major towns of Ipswich and Colchester for services. The Area is **quite sparsely populated**; e.g. just over half of all Braintree's district's residents live in the three principal towns. The remainder live in more rural areas, dispersed throughout the districts 'service' villages.⁴⁰

Despite pockets of deprivation, the Area has no large concentrations of multiple disadvantages. Some **rural areas also suffer deprivation**, but the nature of this deprivation is different to that found in urban town centres. Although most rural areas in the LAG are relatively affluent, the **isolation and lack of access to services can leads to a different type of deprivation**.

There has also been a **significant trend of persons seeking a better quality of life moving to the rural areas** and working in nearby towns, or London and either commuting, or working from home. To further exploit this unique selling point, the LAG economy should continue to support rural enterprises and rural working.

3 The Local Development Strategy

3.1 SWOT analysis of the area

A Wool Towns consultation group met on 16th June 2014 and undertook an analysis to identify the prospective LEADER Area's strengths, disparities, gaps and potential in relation to rural issues across the area.

The SWOT was developed using the brainstorming technique. The analysis from the SWOT was used to set the LEADER Areas Vision and its Priorities whilst relating back to the EU and Defra LEADER Policy priorities. As this is a newly formed LAG it is recognised that this in itself potentially could be seen as a weakness. This will be managed by working with neighbouring areas and through the strong network that this collaborative consultation process has generated.

The key sustainable development themes which have emerged from the analysis are:

Table 3: The Wool Towns Key Themes

⁴⁰ <http://www.essex.gov.uk/SiteAssets/Pages/About-Essex/Appendix%202%20District%20Assessments%20for%20publication.pdf>

Economic Themes	Social Themes	Environmental Themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supply chain importance• Agriculture important in GVA of area• Fast growing area• High proportion of business start ups	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sense of pride in community• Ageing population• Low earnings• Hidden rurality	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Visitor experience in the AONB• Climate Change: water and waste management• Density of undermanaged woodlands• Green tourism.

The SWOT analysis highlights that at the local level people who live and work in the LEADER Area wish to protect and promote the environment through careful management in order to provide the opportunity for business growth and job generation particularly in tourism; this in turn will support those living in the area and in particular support the growing elderly population. The full SWOT can be found in **Appendix 6.1**.

3.2. The Shadow LAG was asked to create a vision for the LEADER Area at the 16th June 2014 meeting. **The Vision** was derived from common themes and statements made by the LAG as to how they would like to see the area by 2020 with EARFD and other partner funding intervention:

“To achieve a **vibrant, self-sustaining and diverse rural economy** that builds on the Wool Town’s **unique sense of place and community** that is characterised by the **rich cultural heritage and pastoral landscape** in the form of **river valleys, ancient woodland and iconic settlements** that are **woven** across the **open farmed countryside**.”

3.2 The Wool Towns Priorities

In order to secure the Areas Vision the LAG partnership have agreed that the programme should deliver an integrated and innovative plan that will support the rural economy and enable it to grow and diversify its business base in a sustainable manner in order to ensure an improved quality of life in the area. The Priorities and Objectives link directly back to the LEADER Policy Priorities. A logic table is set out in **Appendix 6.2** to demonstrate the development of the Wool Towns strategy from SWOT themes through to indicative activities.

The LAG met on the 16th and 30th June and democratically developed and agreed to support the following priorities:

P1: Promote the sustainable economic growth of rural businesses in the Wool Towns LEADER Area.

Within the Wool Towns LAG Area there is a high reliance of Micro and SME’s. However, due to the areas rurality economic conditions are more difficult. It is especially important to exploit the potential of existing businesses to successfully adapt and grow. The traditional primary industries of agriculture and forestry have been contracting in terms of reduced workforces although the GVA of these businesses is a key contributor to the area’s economy.

A key issue facing the rural businesses of north Essex and Suffolk is that they are quite literally **isolated** - in terms of geography and in business with poor connectivity and infrastructure of road, rail and broadband between dispersed market towns of Halsted, Sudbury, Hadleigh and Stowmarket. There is little opportunity to interact and network leading to a lack of knowledge and business intelligence in rural areas. This hinders their stability, growth and expansion. In order to develop and diversify the rural economy and ensure that the economic base continues to grow **innovative projects** will be supported to expand into new areas of economic activity that will focus

on **encouraging job creation**, development of business support growth networks which will **attract and retain the younger workforce** and develop **sustainable supply chains**.

P2: Maintain and improve the range of quality of services and ensure access to them.

The Wool Towns are situated in one of the fastest growing areas in the country. This has led to a wide disparity in the availability of services particularly in the more remote rural areas. Support will be given to meet the needs of the disadvantaged and more isolated groups – both young and old - in order to support local communities. **Co-operative and integrated projects** with existing service providers will be encouraged so as **not to displace existing activity** but to add value to it in rural areas where specific need is demonstrated and links to the key themes and vision for the development of the Area. Community owned shops, pubs, and community facilities and services produce valuable jobs and contributions to their local economies and at the same time serve to sustain many of the rural communities.⁴¹

P3: Promote sustainable management of natural resources, integrating environmental, economic and social needs.

The Area's value of its assets is important to the biodiversity of the area. They are also an important contributor to improving the local economy of the area through supporting a green tourism offer, away from the "honey pot areas" of the Dedham Vale AONB & Stour Valley Project. The characteristic landscape features of the area can also support social and economic activities which in turn will support their maintenance in the long term. Through improved grazing management regimes of the water meadows or culling of wild venison in woodland for example will provide a primary resource for the development of new supply chains. Water in the area is a scarce resource and it is important that its management is improved in order to secure the production of high value crops. Support will be provided to projects that **sustainably manage the countryside** by careful and **innovative management and marketing methods**.

3.3 The Wool Towns Objectives

The LAG partnership have agreed that in order to achieve the support from the Wool Town's LEADER Programme applicants will have to meet one or more of the following Objectives. This will ensure that the projects will aim to meet the overall Vision of the Programme and will be truly sustainable in their outputs.

Table 4: Objectives

The Wool Towns Objectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• EC 1: To develop a coherent and distinct brand through supporting rural tourism by utilising the environmental and cultural offer that the area provides and promoting it to new markets.• EC 2: To support rural businesses (micro and SME'S) to develop and diversify their businesses in order to generate growth, in particular supporting younger entrants.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Soc 1: To provide support to maintain and attract local services that will provide employment opportunities for younger people• Soc 2: To encourage existing community facilities to provide more services that will promote public access to the countryside.

⁴¹ New Anglia Strategic Economic Plan

- Env 1: To improve and enhance woodland management and its supply chain by utilising more efficiently the large areas of undermanaged woodland and in particular providing opportunities to enable younger entrants to woodland businesses and rural sectors
- Env 2: To develop innovative methods that will efficiently conserve natural resources in order to support land users in the LAG Area.

3.4 Programme of Activities

The Wool Towns aim to develop and diversify the rural economy through the creation of jobs and growth of micro and small rural businesses. It will seek also to provide opportunities that will support the creation of jobs and way of life that will encourage a younger workforce to live or stay in the area. Support will be given in particular to projects that are innovative and collaborative that will strengthen the areas local economy in order to meet the challenges of the 21st Century.

Throughout the LDS development and consultation process the Wool Towns have engaged with a number of local businesses and communities to begin to identify potential projects that could be funded through LEADER.

These include for indicative purposes only, as no commitment in any way has been made to the potential applicants, the following:

- **Livery Yard:** Farm diversification to horse livery yard.
- **Farm Contracting Services:** Purchase of specialist direct drilling equipment to develop contracting services.
- **Lavenham Food Hall:** Seeking grant to regenerate redundant farm buildings to create a business hub and food retail and distribution centre.
- **Orchard Barn:** seeking grant to support a rural social enterprise OBeC CIC to support adding value in woodlands and creating a “woodland culture” from the centre based in the LAG area.
- **Suffolk Market Events:** Seeking support for providing advice to local food and drink producers across the LAG area through meet the local buyer events linking to tourism and heritage.
- **Wool Town Wood Hub:** created to create greater partnership working. Individuals, cooperatives, community interest companies and charities etc would then be expected to apply for funding individually.
- **Wool Town Wood Events:** promotes traditional skills, crafts and products.

During the consultation process participants brought forward **further ideas** that have been mapped against the **LEADER Policy Priority** areas and **associated measures and proposed budget allocation**. The table below demonstrates that through the consultation process the possibilities for activities are real and there is an identified need and demand for support through this framework of rural development delivery. The summary page of jobs and projects to be supported per priority is at **Appendix 6.5**.

Table 5: Indicative Activities and Outputs

Policy Priority Measures	Proposed Budget Allocation %	Indicative Activities	Outputs achieved by 2020 Numbers of:	
Support for increasing farm productivity				
Measure 4:	25	• Improved management of under	Projects	14

Investments in physical assets Measure 6: farm and business productivity		used natural assets e.g. undergrazing in river valleys <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Irrigation and water reservoirs• Improve soil management through GPS projects	Jobs created⁴²	6.8
			<i>Businesses⁴³ benefitting</i>	27
			<i>Individuals benefitting</i>	41
			<i>Jobs safeguarded</i>	13.5
Support for micro and SME's and farm diversification				
Measure 4: Investments in physical assets Measure 6: farm and business productivity	40	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conversion of redundant farm buildings• Add value and market products through processing• Promotion of locally produced food, drink and woodland produce from area• Adding value to existing capacity of processing and/or manufacturing businesses• Food hub• Farmers market supply chain work	Projects	33
			Jobs created	56
			<i>Holdings benefitting</i>	16
			<i>Businesses benefitting</i>	66
			<i>Individuals benefitting</i>	132
			<i>Jobs safeguarded</i>	110
Support for rural tourism				
Measure 4: Investments in physical assets Measure 6: farm and business productivity Measure 7: basic services and village renewal in rural areas	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Extend the tourist shoulder season• Promote and develop experiences to attract the stay-cation/family visitor market• Promote local attractions through wi-fi hub and website• Promote "cycling" holidays with associated infrastructure –accom – food - trails	Projects	8
			Jobs created	8
			<i>Existing tourism activities supported</i>	15
			<i>New tourism activities supported</i>	3
			<i>Potential overnight stays</i>	11700
Provision of rural services				
Measure 4: Investments in physical assets Measure 7: basic services and village renewal in rural areas	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supporting community shops with additional services e.g. post offices• Pub is the hub• Child crèches in a village• Support for the elderly though community activities – clubs – walks• Innovative ways to get Broadband for white areas	Projects	4
			Jobs created	2.5
			<i>Businesses benefitting</i>	21
			<i>Villages/communities benefitting</i>	5
			<i>Jobs safeguarded</i>	4
Support for cultural and heritage activity				
Measure 7: basic services and village	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Local festivals and fayres;• Historical trails via bicycles	Projects	3
			Jobs created	1.5

⁴² 1FTE= 30 hrs work per week using the Defra cost per job criteria

⁴³ Italicised numbers stem from National Framework Document requirements & based on experience from previous programmes

renewal in rural areas			Facilities benefitting	2
			Jobs safeguarded	2
Support for increasing forestry productivity				
Measure 4: Investments in physical assets Measure 6: farm and business productivity Measure 8: Investments in forest area development and improvement of the viability of forests	10	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Timber production and marketing– collaboratively or singularlyTimber harvesting, extraction and secondary processing equipmentWood fuel stores; areas of hard standing; woodland access projectsFirewood production and development of supply chainsProducing local woodland productsProcessing and marketing wild venison including investments for High Seats; Collection Storage facilities (larders);Collection Vehicles ;Extraction Equipment including winches, capstan winches and UTVs (Utility Terrain Vehicles);Processing PlantsTransport projects: chip blower lorries: timber lorries: hook bins	Projects	8
			Jobs created	2
			Forests/woodlands/holdings benefitting	15
			Businesses benefitting	7
			Individuals benefitting	15

3.5 Targets, Results and Outputs

The Table (4) above provides a detailed list of outputs. The WT LAG **aims to exceed these targets**. They are based on **creating quality jobs that are sustainable in the long term**. In summary the expected target for the Wool Towns LEADER area by 2020 will deliver the following:

- Create **76 FTE jobs**⁴⁴
- Support **136 rural businesses** in a minimum of **110 commercial projects**
- Support **5 community** investments
- Support **18 tourism actions**
- Bring **212 hectares of woodland into management** and increase the production of wood fuel per annum by **9,836 green tonnes**.
- **Increase day visitors to the area by 58,500** and the **number of overnight stays by 11,700**
- Secure **£2,784,800 of non RDPE** investment to match an RDPE investment of **£1,654,760**.
- Facilitate **3 co-operation** projects, of which at least one will be national or international as opposed to local cooperation with neighbouring LEADER groups

3.6 Alignment with LEP Strategy and Activity

The Wool Towns LEADER Area is supported by the New Anglia LEP (NALEP), the South East LEP (SELEP) and the Greater Cambridge Greater Peterborough Enterprise Partnership (GCPEP). All

⁴⁴ Figures derived using Defra information August 2014

three LEPs have identified in their Strategic Economic Plans the importance to increase innovation, support businesses to develop and grow, to increase investment and skills across the LEP areas. Each LEP is at a different stage in their development.

The NALEP has initiated a network of Business Growth Advisors who provide a signposting service to businesses to supporting them to identify grant funding. The aim is to stimulate faster and more widespread growth, employment and economic activity. Potential LEADER applicants will be able to utilise this service. The GCGP has prioritised their EAFRD funds in supporting rural SMEs and knowledge transfer. SELEP is also focussing their EAFRD on support for rural SMEs.

As LEADER is unable to support in particular skills the linkages and alignment with the LEPs will be crucial in ensuring that the basic infrastructure is in place to support growth. This may include supporting the establishment of a **Destination Management Organisation (DMO)** for the Wool Towns Area to which potential private sector businesses could develop their businesses via LEADER support and benefitting from the DMO infrastructure. The LAG will work closely with all the LEPs as their plans evolve on how they will manage their EAFRD, ERDF and ESF funds. The WT LAG will also liaise with the Haven Gateway Partnership which covers much of the area.

The linked Wool Town LEPs will allocate their EAFRD funding across the four key priority areas of building knowledge and skills in rural areas; advisory services and business development; basic services, inc. broadband and co-operation including tourism. Each LEP regards that the two strands of EAFRD funding will be complimentary to each other rather than of duplication. Projects that may attract funds from NALEP will be larger in scale to those from LEADER and be of a more strategic nature. The LEPs also believe that funds from ESF and ERDF will be allocated to applications in rural areas where LEADER does not reach, e.g. the rural hub towns.

3.7 Sustainability Appraisal

A sustainability appraisal of the LDS has been undertaken by Suffolk County Council and a full copy is available for inspection from the accountable body on request. In undertaking this appraisal the definition used was 'Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'. To conduct the appraisal the Guidance was used from Central Government on how to test the strategy on the principles of Sustainable development.

The actions taken in response to the sustainability appraisal will be to ensure that:

Facilitation of projects promotes sustainable development, by:

- Providing training in the principles of sustainable development for LAG members and project staff.
- Advising project applicants on sustainable development principles in relation to their project.
- The project facilitator will provide support at the project development stage to ensure that projects are financially sustainable and signpost to other support as necessary.

The project appraisal process considers sustainable development in its recommendation:

- Project appraisals will consider the environmental, economic and social sustainability of a project as a matter of course in line with the area priorities and objectives
- Sustainable development will be a part of project monitoring and evaluation procedures.
- Prioritization of projects that score highly against sustainable development principles including the creation of long term sustainable jobs.

Sustainable development of the Wool Towns is at the heart of the vision for the LDS. The LAG is committed to integrating sustainability principles into this Local Development Strategy and the facilitation and project appraisal process detailed above will ensure that all projects adhere to sustainability principles for the duration of the programme.

3.8 Proposed Co-operation Activities

The Wool Towns LEADER Area is a **central point to three neighbouring proposed LEADER Areas**, the Eastern Plateau to its west, and the Heritage Coast to the east and the Essex Rivers to its south. This will lead to opportunities to develop **cross border projects**, some of which are listed in **section 3.4**.

In landscape terms the area to the north of the Wool Towns and along the A14 Corridor is still part of the South Suffolk and North Essex Claylands National Character Area. It also abuts up to the other key landscape areas that form the basis of the distinctiveness of the Waveney Valley LAG, the Brecks LAG and the Heritage Coast LAG.

To the south the Wool Towns LAG will abut up to the Essex Rivers LAG and the Eastern Plateau LAG. Both these LAGs offer similar landscape and land use features to the Wool Towns which provide a strong link across “borders” for activities to develop local services and a tourism destination.

The Wool Towns LEADER LAG is looking for **joint working opportunities** with the Essex Rivers/Eastern Plateau//Heritage Coast LEADER LAG Accountable Bodies to **share roles and duties that support the administration of the programmes** in an efficient and economic manner whilst not detracting from the ongoing day to day delivery and management of each LAG. This will not be required until early 2015, therefore further work is proposed to be undertaken during autumn 2014 to develop and agree Service Level Agreements and/or joint working arrangements between these LEADER Areas prior to launch of their LEADER Programmes.

All the proposed LEADER Areas which are parties to this collaboration abut one another and are similar in terms of both their geographic and economic coherence. By providing a joined up and shared “back office functions” approach it is anticipated that this way forward will provide better value for money in the delivery of LEADER programmes, reducing the management and administrative costs in each area therefore providing more funds for the potential beneficiaries. It will also help the groups to be part of a mutually supportive team which can share best practice.

It is proposed in mid-2015 to review other LEADER LDS's to identify suitable partners in the UK and across the rest of the EU in order to share and learn from each other's experiences over the next five years. The LAG will utilize the information and support provided on the RDPE Network.

4 Management and Administration

4.1 Accountable Body

The role of the Accountable Body (AC) will be undertaken by **Suffolk County Council** who will also act as the AC for the Heritage Coast LAG. In doing so it will share “back office duties” and thus reduce M&A costs.

The External Funding team at SCC will manage this project. It has a **wealth of experience in developing and managing national and European funding projects and programmes**, and will use this experience to support LAG members in developing the Local Development Strategy. The team has recently been involved in the preparation of the New Anglia Structural Investment Fund

Strategy and has experience of supporting Local Action Groups from the last programme in the county. The team also acts as Accountable Body for a number of other similar partnerships including ERDF funded projects (accountable to DCLG) and acting as Accountable Body for New Anglia LEAs funding programmes (Growing Places and Growing Business Fund programmes accountable to DCLG and BIS).

The role of the accountable body will be to carry out/organise the following functions on behalf of the Wool Towns LAG and will ensure the:

- Promotion of the programme and facilitate applicants from across the community in bringing projects forward for consideration for funding
- Project appraisals are conducted, including full financial appraisals where necessary
- Provision of secretariat support to LAG meetings ensuring that members receive papers in good time and provide advice to LAG members on project eligibility.
- Monitoring and evaluation of approved projects to ensure that they deliver project outputs and outcomes on time and within budget.

The role of the LAG is to:

- Promote the programme to the local community
- Consider project proposals presented to the LAG to assess whether the projects should be supported making clear recommendations project approvals
- Review and challenge the LDS and annual delivery plans to ensure they are appropriate.

The Wool Towns LAG will apply the behavioural code of conduct as set out in the LEADER National Delivery Framework to the work of the LAG and Accountable Body.

4.2 Project Development and Assessment Procedures

In order to ensure full transparency and objectivity in delivering the programme the duties of animation and facilitation of projects will be separated from those of appraisal, approval of claims and monitoring. The separation of duties will be achieved as set out in **Section 1.3** above. Full compliance with a Defra Operations Manual will prevail throughout the programme.

The LAG staff will ensure that there are no other potential funding streams that the applicant could use more appropriately than LEADER. The Facilitator will provide “strategic guidance” only to the applicant and will not write the project business plan. There are a number of sources of advisory services within the area, e.g. the NALP business advisers and IGNITE in Braintree. The FSB and Chambers of Commerce are fully supportive of the programme and will advice and signpost further.

The LAG will meet and approve projects as one panel on a quarterly basis. Its role is described in **Section 1**. All documentation will be emailed out to the LAG members at least 10 working days prior to meeting and written/email feedback and consideration will be able to be received prior to the meeting from members who are unable to attend. This process will be reviewed throughout the programme to ensure applications have access to funding in a timely manner to support business growth and job creation.

The LAG staff will manage and monitor the enquiries received and their conversion to successful projects. The information will be used to manage the budget and identify whether further promotion is required across key priority areas.

4.3 Claims and Payments

Following project approval, the Accountable Body will:

- Issue offer letters for approved projects in a timely manner and support successful grant holders in understanding their responsibilities
- Review project progress against targets, take corrective action where needed with project grant holders and keep RDT East / RPA informed on projected spend and review, as necessary, programme spend profiles
- Check project claims and process them before presenting them to the RPA with a recommendation for payment by uploading them onto the RPA supplied IT claims system (CAP D)
- Conduct monitoring and evaluation visits and audit checks on projects including the 'once in a lifetime' visits to all projects before the final claim is made.

Monitoring and project evaluation procedures will comply with the Common Monitoring and Evaluation System framework (CMES).

The Accountable Body will work closely with the RPA East team to ensure that claims and payment systems are delivered effectively. Where projects are given cause for concern, due to lack of communication, failure to hit targets, changes to timing or spend or changes to the approved project, the Accountable Body will liaise with RDT East to agree the correct course of action. All action taken will be fully documented and filed in a separate file for each approved project.

The Accountable Body has established systems in place to archive paperwork and IT system based documentation and will ensure that all documentation relating to LEADER projects and claims are maintained for a minimum of 6 years.

4.4 Communications and Publicity

A full communications and Publicity Plan will be developed during Autumn 2014 prior to the launch of the new programme. It will detail how and to use the following communications methods:

- **Press releases** with new Logo– these will be used to seek local coverage in the media and be timed to coincide with the award of LEADER status (autumn 2014), to promote the opening of the grant scheme (January 2015), when the first grants are approved (March-April 2015). This process will continue as more projects are approved so that media partners promote the programme on an ongoing basis locally.
- **Launch event** – a launch event will be held in January 2015 to promote the programme.
- **Launch a website and social media** – the project website will be launched by December 2014 so that potential applicants can access information on the programme directly.
- **Launch guidance on potential project funding** – this will deliver succinct attractive communication materials which explain the key points of the programme, local priorities and how to take a project forward. These will be distributed direct to potential projects as well being made available to partners to promote in their networks.
- **Use partner communications** –use partners and the wider network who developed the LDS to promote the programme and its possibilities using established communications channels.
- **Attend business and community events** – the project team will attend public events and business and community group events (e.g. NFU branch meetings) to explain how projects can benefit from funding.

All publicity materials will comply with EU and DEFRA rules on publicity and both the LAG and funded projects will use the appropriate logos on all publicity materials, websites and at all funded project locations.

An Action plan of the inception of the programme will be translated into activity is at **Appendix 6.3**.

5 Financial Plan

5.1 Annual Expenditure

The budget is based on the **midpoint**, as advised by Defra, of the overall allocation. This is **£2,018,000** (indicative range is £1,713,000 to £2,384,000). The Wool Towns propose the following:

- Grant aid: £1,654,760 (82% of total budget allocation)
- Admin and animation: £363,240 (18% of total budget allocation)

The intervention rates will typically be between 30% and 40% for the economically driven projects that will account for at least of 70% of all projects supported; for the projects that aim to achieve social benefits the intervention rate will be up to 66%. Together with private sector match funding this will provide a total investment into the area of **£4,802,756** over the programme period (assuming the midpoint of the budget allocation).

The LAG has agreed to prioritise funding for projects requesting intervention of £10,000 and above due to the administrative burden of very small grants which makes them difficult to justify. It is assumed that applicants wishing for grants of over £100,000 are normally more suited to national or LEP funding programmes. This will not preclude applicants bringing forward larger or smaller projects, which will be assessed on merit for either LEADER funding or referral to other programmes.

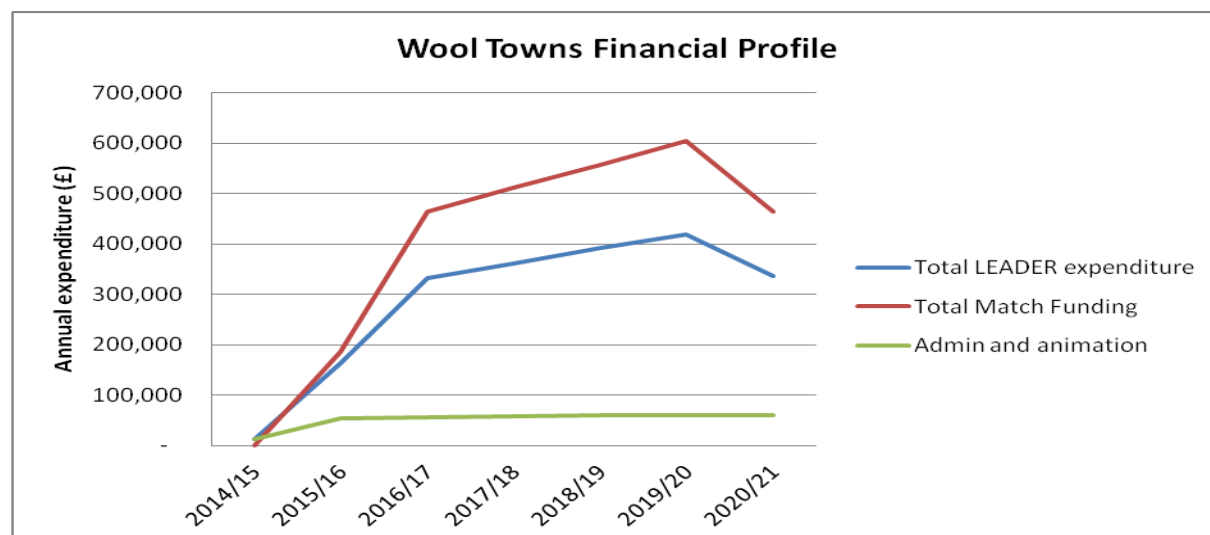
Table 6: LEADER Priority area against budget allocation

Priority Area	% of Grant Budget	Average Grant %	LEADER funding £	Match Funding £	Total Investment £
Support for increasing farm productivity	20.5%	35%	413,690	768,281	1,181,971
Support for micro and SME's and farm diversification	32.8%	35%	661,904	1,229,250	1,891,154
Support for rural tourism	12.3%	40%	248,214	372,321	620,535
Provision of rural services	4.1%	66%	82,738	44,551	127,289
Support for cultural and heritage activity	4.1%	40%	82,738	124,107	206,845
Support for increasing forestry productivity	8.2%	40%	165,476	248,214	413,690
Running costs and animation	18%	100%	363,200	0	363,200
Total	100%		2,017,960	2,784,796	4,802,756

5.2 Overall Funding Profile

The Wool Towns as a new LEADER group have no specific past experience to indicate take up of grant. However through the consultation process projects and ideas that have come forward the proposed profile has been developed. Post the Defra autumn decision the promotion and marketing of the programme will be started in earnest and guidance and strategic support will be given to potential applicants.

The financial table below shows the initial start up in year 1 with a relatively flat profile to year 5 when it is anticipated all funds will be committed. The complete **year on year financial table against LEADER Policy Priorities** is at **Appendix 6.4**



5.3 Use of Grants, Procurement and Other Financial Support

The Wool Towns area lies within three LEPs: New Anglia, South-East and the Greater Cambridge Greater Peterborough Enterprise Partnership. Each of those has an EAFRD allocation, their overall parameters are:

- Knowledge & skills
- Advisory services & business development
- Basic services (inc. broadband)
- Co-operation, including tourism

These are complementary to LEADER priorities and the LAG will seek to integrate projects where possible, to ensure that EAFRD adds value to LAG expenditure. Grant applicants to the LAG will be made aware of the extra opportunities afforded to them by LEP activities.

Greater Cambridge Greater Peterborough Enterprise Partnership (GCGP) and the New Anglia LEP jointly run the Eastern Agri-Tech Growth Initiative. The Initiative is a £3.2m scheme designed to provide a significant boost to the agriculture and food production industry in the Eastern Region.

The scheme will invest in the development and commercialisation of agricultural research and development, SME and supply chain development generating employment, and essential skills development.

Other support for the area's rural businesses will be available from other schemes to be run by Defra as part of the new RDPE. These include the New Environmental Land Management Scheme and the Farm and Forestry Productivity Scheme (probably to include further rounds of the Farming and Forestry Improvement Scheme [FFIS]). Some of the non-farming rural businesses within the area may be eligible for the Business Growth Schemes funded by BIS and managed by the LEPs, where these are available, such as SELEP's EAFRD allocation which is being prioritised to support for rural SME's. Some of the businesses and especially those in the cultural and arts sectors may be eligible for Lottery funding.

Community Led Local Development (CLLD) programmes will be developed by the LEPs to distribute ESF and EFRD funding (in addition to EAFRD) within their areas. They are expected to

adopt LEADER processes for these programmes. The relationship with RDPE LEADER groups has not been determined as yet. The Wool Towns LAG will co-operate fully with and seek to add value to the New Anglia, the South-East and the Greater Cambridge and Greater Peterborough LEP's and the arrangements that they decide upon, if applicable.

The LAG will expect applicants to have explored thoroughly alternative sources of funding and for LEADER to be their final choice ('funder of last resort'); there may well be cases when the LAG is able to fund parts of projects that are supplementary to another scheme. Such cases would be examined thoroughly to ensure that state aid rules were kept and that there were no cases of double funding. All grant applicants would be expected to abide by EU procurement rules.

6 Appendices

Appendix 6.1: Full SWOT Analysis: Undertaken on 16th June 2014

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>Environmental:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beautiful open spaces with historic and characterful towns and villages • Ancient hedgerows with historic field boundaries • Tranquillity yet linked to road networks and other areas of UK • Biodiversity and natural resources • Historic identity: woollen and silk industries • River valley projects • Protected landscape • Strong ecological networks (CWS; SSSIs) • Strong and varied tourist offer • High standard cultural festivals • Music festivals • Affordable, accessible leisure facilities • Identifiable area <p>Land use management:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good soils with warm, dry climate • Expertise in combinable crops and fruit production • Efficient, highly mechanised and with good hi-tec uptake • Flexible approach with good uptake of diversification • Growing markets for woodland products • Largely untapped resource • Good uptake of Stewardship schemes <p>Food:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nationally renowned restaurants • Imaginative and innovative local artisanal food producers <p>Community:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pride in place with commitment to and care for the area 	<p>Demographics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ageing population • Ageing workforce • Wealthy "NIMBYs" • Demographics leading to unbalanced communities. • Specific health issue of high rates of dementia • Hidden areas of serious deprivation <p>Land use management:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small, uneconomic areas of woodland with little collaboration among landowners • Large, sparsely populated proposed LAG area • Heavy soils re flooding and run off. • Increasing deer numbers and disease problems <p>Strategic:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of cohesive, planned marketing of area • Weak or non-existent locality branding • Lack of business support infrastructure to enable change • Difficult to determine what support there is • Lack of visitor management strategy: honey pot areas • Lack of ambition and aspiration • Lack of high quality jobs and employment prospects, career paths for the young • Poor skills in all sectors • Lack of rural employment <p>Support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inaccessible funding • Slow and confused decision making • Slow processes to get funding support

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lively working parish councils • Concern to protect the environment • Localism Act: community empowerment • Low crime rates <p>Location:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Close to markets • Good access to London • Good network of country lanes <p>Commercial:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abundant supply of small businesses ready to grow 	<p>Infrastructure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suburbanisation of the countryside • Proximity to London draws people away • Poor rail structure • Poor access to and between villages • Lack of affordable housing • Poor broadband and mobile networks <p>Organisational:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Market towns have lost role and purpose • Bureaucracy and confusion • Not on UK radar nationally • Opposition to change and development • Poor uptake of technology
Opportunities	Threats
<p>Land use management:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under-managed woodland • Renewable energy • Improved technology <p>Communities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social enterprises • Potential village networks • Develop skills through co-operative working • Partnerships potential largely untapped • Volunteering • Wealthy local population with both experience and funding • Elderly local population's experience and skills • Greater community support for running rural services and businesses (shops, pubs) • Community Interest Company (CIC) structure • Public/private/third sector joint initiatives <p>Food and drink supply chain:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop local food and drink • Develop good farmers' markets • Food hub/centre for local food • Eastern Agri-Tech Growth Initiative <p>Tourism:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Branding for rural tourism • Heritage offer • Collaboration among Wool Towns • Show off traditional and heritage skills in textiles • Under-exploited natural resources for tourism • Build on Constable Country/Lavenham brands • Community events • Cycling/Trails • Collaboration among Destination Marketing Organisations (DMOs) • App for area to inform visitors via mobile phones/tablets 	<p>Demographic:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population changes: elderly; commuting; not engaged • Growing population without infrastructure • Rise of dormitory towns with deleterious effect on villages <p>Land use management:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate change – more severe weather • New pests and diseases • Reform of water abstraction licences • Security of supply of water for agriculture • Pesticide use/Pollution threats to wildlife <p>Economic:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient support for small business growth • No cohesive support for small businesses • Big businesses swallowing small ones • High rate of new business failure • Resistance to change • Loss of hubs (engineering; woodland) as support services for rural economy • Exclusion of some towns from LEADER area • Competition for investment <p>Skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced investment in skills training • Skills lost through ageing workforce <p>Location:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insularity and remoteness <p>Infrastructure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in rural public transport • Poor broadband • Loss of village & market town commerce due to internet shopping • School closures • Limited access to services • Inappropriate and unsustainable development

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High business rates • Low investment in transport systems <p>Support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of funding; Lack of sources of private investment • Need for 60% match funding • LA leadership and slow reaction times • Changing LA agendas • Lack of clear definition of council responsibilities • Withdrawal of WGS
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Appendix 6.2: Logic chain from LEADER Policy Priorities to Key Themes to Priorities to Objectives to Indicative Activities

LEADER Policy Priorities	WT LDS Priorities	WT LDS Objectives	Indicative Activities
Key SWOT Themes: Economic			
Support for increasing farm productivity Support for micro and small enterprises and farm diversification Support for rural tourism Support for cultural and heritage activity Support for increasing forestry productivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brand and market the area and all its products to provide local distinctiveness • Promote and develop the tourism offer utilising the area's natural and cultural assets • Add value to woodland and agricultural products • Develop and support businesses to create new opportunities for green tourism <p>➤ To promote the sustainable economic growth of rural businesses in the Wool Towns LEADER Area</p>	<p>To develop a coherent and distinct brand through supporting rural tourism by utilising the environmental and cultural offer that the area provides and promoting it to new markets.</p> <p>To support rural businesses (micro and SME'S) to develop and diversify their businesses in order to generate growth, in particular supporting younger entrants.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion of locally produced food and drink and wood products from area • Extend the tourist shoulder season • Promote and develop experiences to attract the stay-cation/family visitor market • Promote local attractions through Wi-Fi hubs and websites • Historical trails via bicycles • Conversion of redundant farm buildings • Add value and market products through processing • Management of natural assets to secure economic outcomes e.g. marketing and promoting livestock used to graze undermanaged grassland. • Adding value to existing capacity of processing and/or manufacturing businesses

			<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Food hub• Farmers markets supply chain work
KEY SWOT Themes: Social			
Support for micro and small enterprises and farm diversification	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strengthen and showcase sense of pride in community, reviving market towns and villages as commercial centres• Support and develop services to meet local needs in rural areas• Improve public access to countryside and care for the elderly <p>➤ Maintain and improve the range of quality of services and ensure access to them</p>	To provide support to maintain and attract local services that will provide employment opportunities for younger people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Child crèches in a village• Support for the elderly through community activities – clubs – walks• Innovative ways to get Broadband in the “white areas”
Support for rural tourism		To encourage existing community facilities to provide more services that will promote public access to the countryside.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supporting community shops with additional services e.g. post offices• Pub is the hub• Local festivals and fayres
Provision of rural services			
Support for cultural and heritage activity			
Support for increasing forestry productivity			
Key SWOT themes: Environmental			
Support for increasing farm productivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maximise, conserve and enhance the natural assets of the area• Protect and enhance water and waste management <p>➤ Promote sustainable management of natural resources, integrating social, economic and environmental needs.</p>	To improve and enhance woodland management and its supply chain by utilising more efficiently the large areas of undermanaged woodland and in particular providing opportunities to enable younger entrants to woodland businesses and rural sectors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Timber production and marketing – collaboratively or singularly• Firewood production and development of supply chains• Producing local woodland products• Processing and marketing wild venison
Support for micro and small enterprises and farm diversification		To develop innovative methods that will efficiently conserve natural resources in order to support land users in the LAG Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Irrigation and water reservoirs• Improvement of soil management through GPS projects• Improved management of under used natural assets e.g. under grazing in river valleys
Support for rural tourism			
Provision of rural services			
Support for increasing forestry productivity			

Appendix 6.3: Action Plan for Inception of Project

Timing	Action	Completion criteria	Responsibility
Nov 2014	Funding awarded	Letter confirming award	Defra
	Appoint temporary LEADER team	Team appointed; ToRs agreed	SCC : AB
	Review permanent staffing needs and employment terms	Job and person descriptions. Job advertisements	SCC: AB & HR
	Temp team in post	3 month action plan developed	AB; Temp team
Dec 2014	LEADER posts advertised	Short list of applicants	SCC: HR
	Draft LAG constitution prepared	Draft constitution circulated to LAG	AB; Temp team
	PR: funding award; priorities; contact details; Logo etc	First stage PR completed	Temp team
Jan 2015	LEADER team interviews	Full-time staff appointed	AB; LAG; HR
	Initial LAG meeting held	3 month action plan approved	Temp team
	PR	Launch of Programme	Temp team
	Grant application process designed	Grant process agreed with Defra	Temp team
	Programme of contacts with supportive organisations	Programme agreed	Temp team
	Eols encouraged via PR, local meetings	Eols received; applications invited	Temp team
	Office location & terms finalised	Office established	Temp team
Feb 2015	LAG training programme	Programme agreed, shared with other local LEADER areas	Temp team
	Office equipment tendered	Office equipment installed	AB; temp team
	First 'oven-ready' grant applications received	Applications checked and passed for appraisal	Temp team; AB
	Initial LAG training	LAG aware of obligations, responsibilities and processes.	Temp team
March 2015	Hand-over to full-time staff. Full induction programme	Induction programme completed	AB.
	First year action plan prepared	Action plan approved; submitted to regional RDT	LAG Team; AB
April 2015	LAG meeting	Approval of first projects	AB; LAG

Appendix 6.4: Year on Year Financial Table



LEADER 2014-2020 Local Development Strategy Application Financial Profile

1. Applicant Details

Local Action Group:		The Wool Towns
Accountable Body:		Suffolk County Council

2. Financial Profile

Policy Priority	Expenditure Forecast (£)							Total programme
	Financial Year							
	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021	
Support for increasing farm productivity		27,579	68,948	75,843	82,738	89,633	68,948	413,690
Support for micro and small enterprises and farm diversification		44,127	110,317	121,349	132,381	143,413	110,317	661,904
Support for rural tourism		16,548	41,369	45,506	49,643	53,780	41,369	248,214
Provision of rural services		5,516	13,790	15,169	16,548	17,927	13,790	82,738
Support for cultural and heritage activity		5,516	13,790	15,169	16,548	17,927	13,790	82,738
Support for increasing forestry productivity		11,032	27,579	30,337	33,095	35,853	27,579	165,476
Running costs and animation	12,855	53,562	55,794	58,118	60,540	61,145	61,186	363,200
Grand Total	12,855	163,879	331,587	361,491	391,492	419,677	336,979	2,017,960

Appendix 6.5: LEADER Policy Priorities versus Expected Outputs

LEADER Policy Priority	RDPE expenditure per FTE job created (£)	Average RDPE grant size (£)	Relevant CMES output indicators for LDS application	End of programme forecast (by December 2020)
Support for increasing farm productivity	61,011	29,884	Total RDPE expenditure	£413,690
			Number of projects supported	14
			Jobs created (FTE)	6.8
Support for micro and small enterprises and farm diversification	11,931	19,951	Total RDPE expenditure	£661,904
			Number of projects supported	33
			Jobs created (FTE)	55.5
Support for rural tourism	32,477	31,764	Total RDPE expenditure	£248,214
			Number of projects supported	8
			Jobs created (FTE)	7.6
Support for culture and heritage activity	55,991	28,165	Total RDPE expenditure	£82,738
			Number of projects supported	3
			Jobs created (FTE)	1.5
Provision of rural services	33,272	23,378	Total RDPE expenditure	£82,738
			Number of projects supported	4
			Jobs created (FTE)	2.5
Support for increasing forestry productivity	77,045	21,788	Total RDPE expenditure	£165,476
			Number of projects supported	8
			Jobs created (FTE)	2.1
TOTAL			Total RDPE expenditure	£1,654,760
			Number of projects supported	69
			Jobs created (FTE)	76.0

Note: Assuming 50% culture, heritage and tourism of projects provide non-economic outputs: Total expenditure on economically led LEADER project: **£1,447,915 (87.5%)**.

Appendix 6.6: Letters of support from New Anglia, South East and Greater Cambridge Greater Peterborough LEPs



Frances Bedding
Head of External Funding
Suffolk County Council
Endeavour House
8 Russell Road
Ipswich
Suffolk
IP1 2BX

12 August 2014

Dear Frances

LEADER programme 2015-20: Suffolk and Essex Wool Towns Local Development Strategy

I am writing on behalf of Greater Cambridge Greater Peterborough Enterprise Partnership (GCGP) to endorse the Suffolk and Essex Wool Towns Local Development Strategy (LDS) for the delivery of the LEADER programme in the area between 2015 and 2020.

We have worked with the Wool Towns Local Action Group to ensure that LEADER activities are in alignment with the GCGP Strategic Economic Plan as the attached table demonstrates.

We believe that the LDS is complimentary to the EAFRD element of our European Structural and Investment Funds strategy and that in combination they can make a valuable contribution to developing the rural economy and making it a sustainable place to live and work, providing opportunities for growth across all sectors.

We will support delivery of the LDS for this area through our seat on the Local Action Group and we look forward to working with you.

Yours sincerely

Michael Barnes
Programme Manager
Greater Cambridge Greater Peterborough LEP
www.yourlocalenterprisepartnership.co.uk

T: 01480 27780
E: info@gcgpp.co.uk
Company Registration No. 07553554
www.gcgpp.co.uk

The Incubator, Alconbury Wood Enterprise Campus
Alconbury Airfield, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire PE28 4WX
 @YourLEP Your Local Enterprise Partnership



Strategic Fit between Greater Cambridge Greater Peterborough Enterprise Partnership

LEP Strategy Priorities	LEADER Policy Priorities	The Wool Towns LEADER Priorities
Accelerating Business Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for increasing farm productivity • Support for micro and SMEs and farm diversification • Support for rural tourism • Support for increasing forestry productivity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the sustainable economic growth of rural businesses in the Wool Towns LEADER Area.
Maximising Digital Connectivity and Exploitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for increasing farm productivity • Support for micro and SMEs and farm diversification • Support for rural tourism • Provision of rural services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the sustainable economic growth of rural businesses in the Wool Towns LEADER Area. • Maintain and improve the range of quality of services and ensure access to them
Removing Skills Barriers to Continued Growth		
Supporting Transport Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for increasing farm productivity • Support for micro and SMEs and farm diversification • Support for rural tourism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the sustainable economic growth of rural businesses in the Wool Towns LEADER Area. • Maintain and improve the range of quality of services and ensure access to them
Facilitating Provision of Commercial Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for increasing farm productivity • Support for micro and SMEs and farm diversification 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the sustainable economic growth of rural businesses in the Wool Towns LEADER Area. • Maintain and improve the range of quality of services and ensure access to them
Supporting the Shift Towards a Low Carbon Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for increasing farm productivity • Support for micro and SMEs and farm diversification • Support for increasing forestry productivity. • Provision of rural services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the sustainable economic growth of rural businesses in the Wool Towns LEADER Area. • Promote sustainable management of natural resources, integrating social, economic and social needs.
Promoting Social Inclusion and Combating Poverty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of rural services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain and improve the range of quality of services and ensure access to them



By e-mail

26th August 2014

To whomever this may concern,

LEADER 2015-2020 LOCAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY – The Wool Towns LAG
Letter of Endorsement from New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership

In accordance with the stated requirements of Defra, I am writing to you on behalf of New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership (NALEP) to confirm our support and endorsement of the above Local Development Strategy for the delivery of the LEADER Programme between 2015 and 2020 for the area.

We have worked with the Local Action Group to ensure that LEADER activities are in alignment with NALEP's Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) and European Structural and Investment Fund Strategy (ESIFS). An overview of this assessment is annexed to this letter.

In reviewing the Local Development Strategy (LDS) we have taken care to ensure that the LDS has been developed in the context of the wider strategic growth agenda of the LEP, whilst recognising and respecting that locally determined strategies reflect the desires and priorities of the LAG and wider stakeholders, as established through considerable engagement and consultation over recent months. We are very aware that LAGs fulfil a unique role within targeted local rural communities which the LEP, given its wider remit, cannot undertake as effectively.

We believe that the LDS is complementary to our SEP and the EAFRD investment priorities stated within our ESIFS, and will jointly make a valuable contribution to developing the rural economy and making it a sustainable place to live and work providing opportunities for growth across all sectors. We are particularly impressed, given that this is a new LAG area proposal, with the realistic ambition of the LDS and the focus made on maximising and building upon the strengths and heritage of the area.

We are committed, where resources permit, to continue to help to develop and deliver the Local Development Strategy for this area, and will consider the most appropriate mechanism to contributing to the LAG meetings. We have a shared aspiration to join up activity, knowledge and awareness in the future to ensure the most appropriate use of public funds to benefit rural communities.

New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership
Walpole Suite | Ketteringham Hall | Church Lane | Ketteringham | Norwich | Norfolk | NR18 9RS
Company number: 07685830

New Anglia LEP strongly supports the ambition of the Wool Towns LAG in its efforts to attract LEADER status and I hope this letter is helpful with that aim. We look forward to working closely with the LAG and to hearing about a positive outcome in the near future.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Alastair Rhind".

Alastair Rhind
European Programmes Manager

alastair.rhind@newanglia.co.uk
01603 510080

Strategic alignment with New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership

LEP Strategy Priorities	Leader Policy Priorities	The Wool Towns Leader Priorities
Our Growing Economy: To capitalise on our global strengths in areas such as agri-tech and life sciences, energy, ICT and creative digital, to accelerate growth in our economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for increasing farm productivity • Support for micro and small enterprises and farm diversification • Support for rural tourism: Provision of rural services • Support for culture and heritage activity • Support for increasing forestry productivity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the sustainable economic growth of rural businesses in the Wool Towns Leader Area. • Promote sustainable management of natural resources, integrating social, economic and social needs.
Green Pathfinder: To strengthen our leadership role in the green economy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for increasing farm productivity • Support for micro and small enterprises and farm diversification • Support for rural tourism: Provision of rural services • Support for increasing forestry productivity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the sustainable economic growth of rural businesses in the Wool Towns Leader Area. • Promote sustainable management of natural resources, integrating social, economic and social needs. • Maintain and improve the range of quality of services and ensure access to them.
Skills: To attain our goal of more high value jobs and more productive businesses, we need to improve our skills system. The resident workforce is ageing, low skilled and low paid.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for increasing farm productivity • Support for micro and small enterprises and farm diversification • Support for rural tourism: Provision of rural services • Support for culture and heritage activity • Support for increasing forestry productivity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the sustainable economic growth of rural businesses in the Wool Towns Leader Area. • Promote sustainable management of natural resources, integrating social, economic and social needs. • Maintain and improve the range of quality of services and ensure access to them.
Growth Locations: New and expanding businesses need space to grow and high quality infrastructure to help them be productive and competitive.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for increasing farm productivity • Support for micro and small enterprises and farm diversification • Support for culture and heritage activity • Provision of rural services • Support for increasing forestry productivity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the sustainable economic growth of rural businesses in the Wool Towns Leader Area. • Promote sustainable management of natural resources, integrating social, economic and social needs. • Maintain and improve the range of quality of services and ensure access to them.
Broadband, Mobile and Other Infrastructure: Including Flood Defence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of rural services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain and improve the range of quality of services and ensure access to them.



Peter Jones
Chairman of SE LEP
c/o Essex County Council
Room C328
County Hall
Chelmsford
CM1 1LX

Harry Barnett
Wool Towns Leader LAG
c/o Frances Bedding
Suffolk County Council
Endeavour House
8 Russell Road
Ipswich IP1 2BX

2nd September 2014

Dear Mr Barnett,

Re: Letter of Endorsement for the Wool Towns Local Development Strategy 2015-2020

I am writing to give the endorsement of the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SE LEP) to the Wool Towns Local Development Strategy for the delivery of the LEADER Programme between 2015 and 2020.

Thank you for involving SE LEP in your Local Development Strategy process. The rural representative, on the SE LEP Board, has expressed his whole hearted support and continued interest in the work you are doing.

The SE LEP has worked with the Local Action Group to ensure that LEADER activities in the Local Development Strategy are in alignment with our Strategic Economic (SEP) and EU Structural and Investment Funding (ESIF) Plans. We are confident that these are complementary and that, together they will make a significant and valuable contribution to developing the rural economy, making it a sustainable place to live and work; providing opportunities for growth across all sectors.

We are committed to helping you to deliver the Local Development Strategy and to ensuring the synergies between EU funding streams and will support this through our representation on the Local Action Group. We look forward to continuing to work with you in future.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter Jones".

Peter Jones, CBE
Chairman, South East Local Enterprise Partnership

Strategic alignment with the South East Local Enterprise Partnership.

LEP Strategy Priorities	Leader Policy Priorities	The Wool Towns Leader Priorities
Accelerating Growth: Enterprise and Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for increasing farm productivity • Support for micro and small enterprises and farm diversification • Support for rural tourism: • Provision of rural services • Support for increasing forestry productivity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the sustainable economic growth of rural businesses in the Wool Towns Leader Area. • Promote sustainable management of natural resources, integrating social, economic and social needs. • Maintain and improve the range of quality of services and ensure access to them.
Creating Competitive Locations: Infrastructure and Property	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for culture and heritage activity • Provision of rural services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain and improve the range of quality of services and ensure access to them.
Building a 21st Century Workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for increasing farm productivity • Support for micro and small enterprises and farm diversification • Support for rural tourism: • Provision of rural services • Support for increasing forestry productivity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the sustainable economic growth of rural businesses in the Wool Towns Leader Area. • Promote sustainable management of natural resources, integrating social, economic and social needs. • Maintain and improve the range of quality of services and ensure access to them.
Enabling Housing Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of rural services 	