



Cotswolds
LEADER
Programme

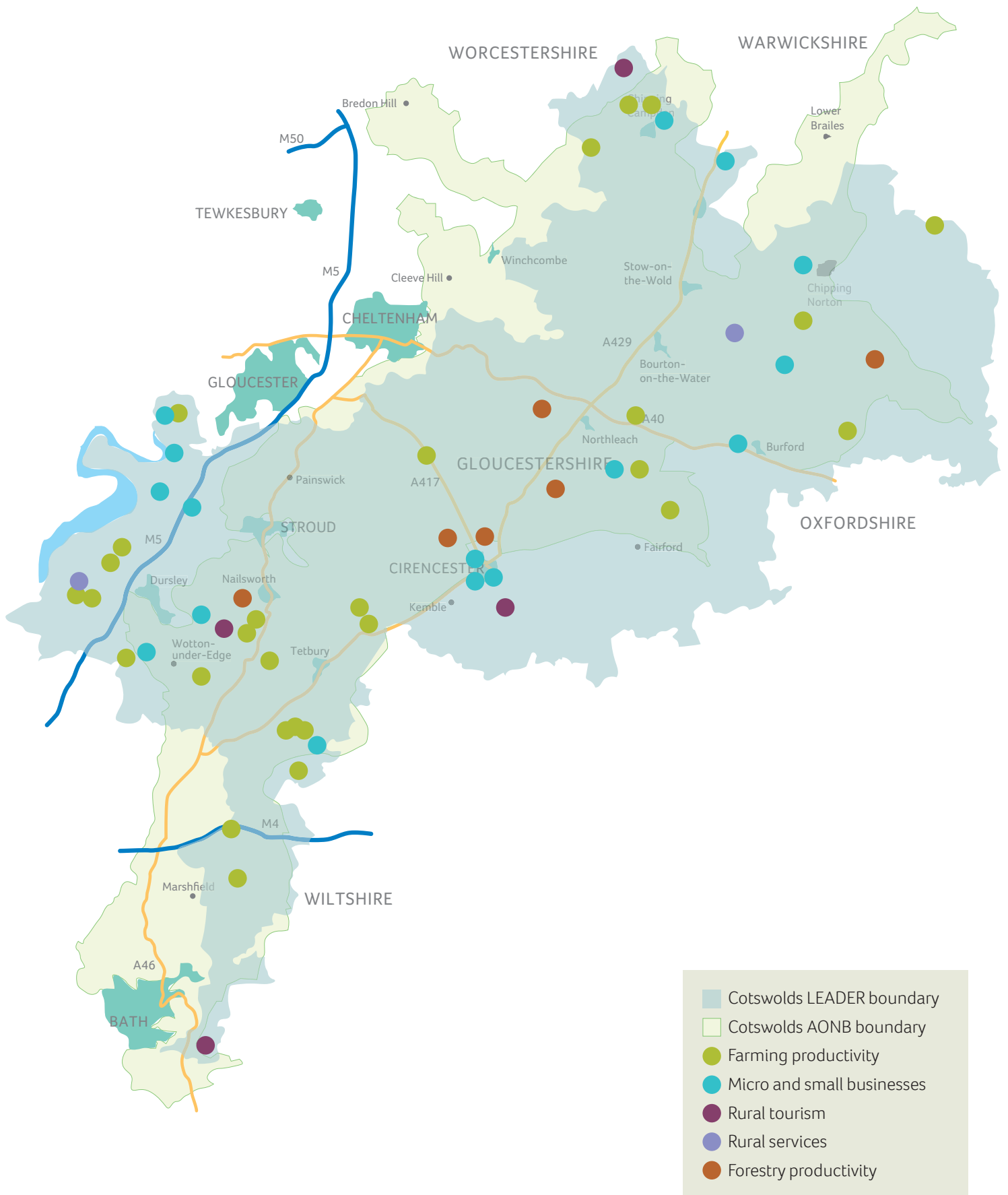
Cotswolds LEADER 2015 – 2020

A rural success story

Reporting and celebrating the achievements of the Cotswolds LEADER Programme



Cotswolds LEADER projects



Foreword

It has been very satisfying to see the completion of this part of the European RDPE funding programme across the Cotswolds. With over £1.7 million grant investment some great results have been achieved for the 56 businesses, local employment, communities, and the Cotswolds landscape.



It has been especially satisfying for me to have been involved from the beginning; helping to put together the initial proposal in 2014 to ensuring the funding we received was well deployed, well spent, and met the targets and priorities we set 6 years ago.

So this report is an important record of achievements that illustrates the diversity of grant aided projects and their geographic spread. The Cotswolds LEADER area broadly mirrored the AONB and also included the Severn Vale and west Oxfordshire.

The parts of the AONB not covered by our programme were supported by adjoining LEADER programmes in the West of England and Tewkesbury.

This type of programme is intended to involve a lot of people along the way – it is a real community effort on many different fronts. By reading this report, you will gain an impression of what it has meant to those involved.

There are far too many to thank here but I need to acknowledge in particular the Cotswolds Conservation Board (CCB) who were prepared to take up the challenge from West Oxfordshire, Cotswolds and Stroud District Councils, of becoming the Accountable Body for the programme, a task normally undertaken by a local authority economic development department. In this regard the Cotswolds has been unique across the 79 LEADER programmes.

The small volunteer Executive team, appointed by CCB, to make decisions on approving and awarding grants has been great fun to lead. They have

offered their knowledge, experience and love of the Cotswolds voluntarily and with considerable aplomb. Attendance at meetings has always been high.

Finally, thanks go to the programme team itself: James, Lioba and Mandy. Each has played such a crucial role in ensuring the programme requirements have been met. The support given to the applicants, many of whom have never been through such a process, has been highly valued.

We have taken a variety of opportunities to present our supported projects to a wider audience and sought to use them to inform and influence what might come next. As part of an England-wide community of LEADER programmes, our work is well placed to help shape a future for rural development.

Jo Burgon

Chair of the Cotswolds LEADER Local Action Group



Wholly Gelato, Elmore, Gloucestershire



Forestry harvester, Arbor Tree Care



Westend Office Suites, Stonehouse

Our achievements

Farm productivity

28 projects supported
£644,584 grants total
2 jobs created

Farm businesses were supported with a wide range of equipment and machinery across the Cotswolds and beyond. Arable, dairy and sheep farms all received grants ranging in size from £5,000 – £50,000. The primary aim of the grants was to increase the productivity of farm operations. However, in all cases, there were significant environmental and/or animal health and welfare benefits.

Arable

The programme enabled 12 farm businesses to invest in direct and minimal tillage drills. Compared to conventional ploughing, direct and minimal tillage drills plant the seeds quicker and more efficiently. Fewer passes over the field means savings in labour and fuel costs. New efficient machinery and techniques significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Conventional ploughing turns over the soil and destroys the structure, as well as micro-organisms and earthworms. Using a direct drill protects the soil structure, decreasing the disruption to the ground and the associated organisms. Stable soils are also much better at carbon capture; locking the organic matter into the soils.

Soil moisture and porosity is improved and soil erosion is reduced. This increases germination of small grain crops in dry conditions and



Alex Jones and Weaving GD Direct Drill

allows good root development. Strong establishment and healthy crops results in less herbicide and pesticide use. Collectively, these factors improve water quality by reducing the loss of sediment, nutrients and pesticides into water courses.

The drills were used by a minimum of 14 farms with a total landholding of 7,514 hectares (18,567 acres). A number of the farms also used the drills for local contracting, thereby increasing the environmental benefits across a wider land area.

This investment has also presented a significant opportunity for improving the management of archaeological sites in cultivation. This is particularly important because the Cotswolds is an area where the risk of plough damage is amongst the highest nationally. An assessment of the archaeology within 2km of each of the supported farm businesses shows a good range of typical Cotswolds archaeology, including prehistoric barrows and enclosures, Roman farms and the odd villa and medieval remains of villages and field systems.

“The LEADER grant towards our System Cameleon drill has provided many positive outcomes: new techniques such as inter-row hoeing & sowing; a saving on fuel & labour due to increased efficiencies and productivity; and lastly, the potential to increase our overall yields through mechanical weeding and better establishment of fertility building leys.”

Sam Phillips, Cotswold Organic Growers



Our achievements – Farm productivity

Dairy

Eight dairy farmers have benefited from grants towards cluster flush systems (4), a robotic milking system (1), rumination collar systems (2) and cow mattresses (1). These parlour investments boost farm productivity and improve animal health and welfare. Cluster flush systems reduce the incidence of mastitis in the herd. As well as increasing herd health, there are environmental benefits such as a reduction in the use of chemicals and antibiotics, and wasted milk.

Two dairy farmers invested in trailing shoe slurry systems in order to better manage their slurry. The system allows precision application at the optimum time in the crop cycle. It also allows slurry to be moved from the lagoon to the field with little machinery transport, therefore reducing compaction. The trailing



shoe slurry system achieves a uniform line of slurry on the soil surface, which reduces nitrogen losses by up to 80% compared with a traditional splash plate method.

“We’ve milked cows for 35 years, it made us realise and understand we needed to change things. We decided to go down the robotic side of things. Technology is progress, it’s the way the world is going. You either embrace it or you don’t; I choose to embrace it.”

Rex Smith, Dairy farmer

Sheep farming

The Programme has supported two farmers with the purchase of mobile sheep handling systems. These modest investments make a significant contribution to operational efficiency and productivity in what is often a marginal business in small-medium flocks. Both of the supported farms are based on the escarpment/hilly areas. The grasslands are largely ancient pasture with areas of high species diversity, including grassland with SSSI status. The farmers graze these sites sensitively to maintain the floristic diversity. These are often small, isolated sites that would quickly scrub over with the absence of grazing.



DeLaval robotic milking system

Our achievements – Micro and small businesses

Micro and small businesses

16 projects supported
£683,513 grants total
64 jobs created

The grants under this theme supported a wide range of projects from the construction of new offices, farm shops and an education centre, to equipment ranging from a custom built still to a log-drying kiln. Grant sizes ranged from £5,000 – £100,000. The primary aim was to stimulate economic growth and create jobs. The grants also safeguarded existing jobs and facilitated promotions for existing staff.



FarmED Education building at Shipton-under-Wychwood

Applications were welcomed from projects critically dependent upon the Cotswolds environment for success, and unique projects developing innovative approaches or techniques, such as FarmED and Jive Pony.

FarmED's mission is to accelerate the transition towards regenerative farming and sustainable food systems

by providing space for inspirational education, innovative research, and practitioner-led knowledge exchange events. FarmED is an important education resource and will create a lasting legacy. The training barn at Jive Pony is another fantastic resource for the Cotswolds. Young people now have excellent facilities in which to train with horses and learn vaulting skills.



Rebecca Musslewhite, Jive Pony

Our achievements – Micro and small businesses

Three projects received the top grant sum of £100,000; one in Wiltshire, one in Gloucestershire, and one in Oxfordshire. Between them, these projects made a significant contribution towards the programme's overall job creation target.

A wide variety of jobs were created. Project reports and site visits revealed that some of the new jobs were filled by hard to reach groups such as those leaving the military. It was also pleasing to note that those recently made redundant were able to quickly gain employment as a result of new opportunities afforded by the programme.

In addition to the primary outputs of job creation, a number of important secondary benefits were secured. Veritas Property Management sensitively restored a Victorian farm building that forms part of the attractive setting of Bremilham church, 'the smallest church in England', carefully retaining its original form and many of its features: a textbook example of creative re-use in a sensitive historic context. Another building, the new 'Vegetable Matters' farm shop at Ebrington, was one of the



Barney Wilczak, Capreolus Distillery

winners at the Campaign to Protect Rural England county awards scheme for its sustainable building design.

A number of projects in this priority were important for growing local supply chains. Examples include the farm shops at Wotton and

Ebrington, and the community shop at Bledington. Watermoor Meats (the company behind the Jessie Smith butchers shops) support livestock farmers, and Capreolus Distillery now supports a community of local fruit producers.

"Thanks to LEADER we have been able to extend our farm shop, bringing a boost in sales and more employment for local people. We can now offer seating in our bespoke cafe area to our customers who are greatly enjoying this and it has also allowed us to bring in more products from many local suppliers. Without the additional funding none of this would have been possible and we would not have been able to grow."

Paul Grimes, Wotton Farm Shop



Our achievements – Rural tourism

Rural tourism

4 projects supported
£144,484 grants total
5 jobs created

The grants under this theme supported the creation of high quality tourist accommodation. Grant sizes ranged from £16,000 – £50,000. The primary aim was to develop high quality tourism infrastructure, extend the tourism season and encourage visitors to stay. The grants also created jobs and grew the rural economy. Three projects supported farm diversification enterprises.

Tim Bowles, The Farm Camp



Little Country Houses, Chipping Campden

Two projects received the top grant sum, and both involved the restoration and conversion of derelict agricultural buildings. In the case of Owlpen Park Farms, an attractive Cotswold stone barn was converted. It was empty for many years and would likely have fallen into further disrepair were it not for this project. The accommodation is ideal for groups of up to 10 people (5 double rooms). Accommodation of this type is sparse in the locality so it is an important addition to the tourism infrastructure.

Two of the projects under this theme are ideally located to some of the best outdoor spaces in the Cotswolds with easy access by foot, bicycle, or horseback. The new accommodation at Cerney Wick Farm is located next to the Cotswold Water Park and Longhills Farm is located next to the Cotswold Way National Trail. The 'Farm Camp' glamping site is another project, which boasts fantastic access to natural amenities. Based on an impressive hilltop farm near Winsley, with the beautiful river Avon in the valley below.

"The grant has allowed us to create a much higher quality facility and we have won more business as a result. All visitors are really impressed by the upgrade and it seems to be snowballing and gaining momentum. Thanks so much for all the support – we are so grateful."

**Tim Bowles,
Founder of The Farm Camp**



Our achievements – Rural services

Rural services

2 projects supported
£57,534 grants total
1 job created

The grants under this theme supported the creation of a new community shop at Bledington and a complete renovation of the education room at Berkeley Castle. Grant sizes ranged from £18,000 – £39,000. The primary aim was to benefit the rural population and create jobs.

Berkeley Castle

Berkeley Castle is a medieval castle full of 900 years of history, which makes it a popular choice for school visits. In order to expand, formalise, and increase the quality of the castle's educational offering, an unused building within the castle grounds was converted for use as an education room. The Cotswolds LEADER grant enabled the full refurbishment of the building, retaining its original shape but making it more energy efficient

with thermal insulated wall boards, insulated flooring, and a new insulated roof.

The room is used for history based education workshops, small exhibitions, informative talks by

guides and discussions with students as a lead into tours that are tailored to the school curriculum. As well as increasing the number of educational visits, the education room leaves children feeling inspired and uplifted after learning about the history of Berkeley Castle. The new service is available to local schools, thereby benefiting the local community.



“Our grant from the Cotswold LEADER Programme made it possible for us to begin construction on the Community Shop and Cafe. Providing a place to meet with friends and colleagues, it has become the heart of our community in one of the loveliest villages in the Cotswolds.”

Robin McCulloch, Co-Chair of Bledington Community Shop and Cafe



Education room at Berkeley Castle

Our achievements – Forestry productivity

Forestry productivity

6 projects supported
£198,893 grants total
8 jobs created

The grants under this theme supported a range of forestry harvesting equipment, a number of firewood processors, and improvements to wood storage areas. Grant sizes ranged from £5,000 – £50,000. The primary aim was to create jobs. The grants also reached all parts of the supply chain and contributed to the management of neglected woodlands.



The team at Walkers Logs

Bathurst Estate

The Bathurst Estate contains one of the largest woodlands in Gloucestershire. It forms part of a registered parkland, is open to the public and contains key ecological habitats. The grant supported the purchase of a forestry tractor, forwarding trailer with crane, winch

and a firewood processor. The equipment has enabled the Forestry team to harvest and process firewood much more efficiently. As a result, they now have more time for woodland management activities such as ride widening. Sunny rides are well known to benefit a variety of woodland species.



“Since having the tractor and winch, we have been able to undertake works on the Estate previously inaccessible due to lack of specialist machinery. This includes maintenance of the extensive rides on the estate and felling dangerous trees that had been identified in public areas. The firewood processor has enabled us to provide our customers with a better quality of product, at a faster rate, and reduced the physical labour. It has been a huge asset to the Estate and made our work considerably more productive and enjoyable.”

John Rutterford, Head Forester

Where the grants went

Cotswolds LEADER figures by County

County	Farm productivity	Micro & small businesses	Rural tourism	Rural services	Forestry productivity	Total
Spend						
Gloucestershire	£411,023.51	£464,323.97	£128,408.81	£57,533.88	£151,429.43	£1,212,719.60
Oxfordshire	£81,096.80	£119,193.77	£0.00	£0.00	£47,463.74	£247,754.31
Wiltshire	£147,257.80	£99,995.06	£16,074.81	£0.00	£0.00	£263,327.67
Worcestershire	£5,206.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£5,206.00
Total	£644,584.11	£683,512.80	£144,483.62	£57,533.88	£198,893.17	£1,729,007.58
Projects						
Gloucestershire	18	12	3	2	5	40
Oxfordshire	4	3	0	0	1	8
Wiltshire	5	1	1	0	0	7
Worcestershire	1	0	0	0	0	1
Total	28	16	4	2	6	56
Jobs						
Gloucestershire	0.66	43.76	4.25	1.00	5.60	55.27
Oxfordshire	1.00	6.00	0.00	0.00	2.00	9.00
Wiltshire	0.30	14.00	1.00	0.00	0.00	15.30
Worcestershire	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total	1.96	63.76	5.25	1.00	7.60	79.57

Cotswolds LEADER figures by Local Authority

Local Authority	Farm productivity	Micro & small businesses	Rural tourism	Rural services	Forestry productivity	Total
Spend						
Stroud	£111,970.69	£249,705.45	£49,124.50	£18,507.88	£5,580.00	£434,888.52
Cotswold	£304,258.82	£214,618.52	£79,284.31	£39,026.00	£145,849.43	£783,037.08
West Oxfordshire	£81,096.80	£119,193.77	£0.00	£0.00	£47,463.74	£247,754.31
Wiltshire	£147,257.80	£99,995.06	£16,074.81	£0.00	£0.00	£263,327.67
Total	£644,584.11	£683,512.80	£144,483.62	£57,533.88	£198,893.17	£1,729,007.58
Projects						
Stroud	7	6	1	1	1	16
Cotswold	12	6	2	1	4	25
West Oxfordshire	3	3	0	0	1	7
Wiltshire	6	1	1	0	0	8
Total	28	16	4	2	6	56
Jobs						
Stroud	0.66	25.16	1	0	0.6	27.42
Cotswold	0	18.6	3.25	1	5	27.85
West Oxfordshire	1	6	0	0	2	9
Wiltshire	0.3	14	1	0	0	15.3
Total	1.96	63.76	5.25	1	7.6	79.57

Our Cotswolds LEADER journey

As part of the bidding process to secure the LEADER programme, a document called the Local Development Strategy (LDS) was produced. The LDS mapped out the expectations of where the money was to be allocated within the six LEADER investment themes. The small business theme received the largest allocation, followed by tourism and farming. Forestry, culture and heritage and rural services each received a relatively small allocation. The LDS also described the types of activities and projects expected and anticipated projects to be quickly processed and paid.

What went as expected?

- The number of projects supported and jobs created.
- The small business theme received the largest allocation and was responsible for most of the job creation.
- 30 farm holdings were supported with high tech equipment and a further 5 farms were supported with farm diversification projects.

What were our surprises?

- The types of projects supported were far more diverse than the LDS could have predicted. Many involved cutting edge technology and created a wide range of new employment opportunities making local communities more resilient.
- New technology designed to increase farm productivity also resulted in better environmental land management. For example, improved soils and water courses from the investment in direct drills, fertiliser spreaders and trailing shoe slurry systems.
- The ability to move resource between investment themes, demonstrating responsiveness of Rural Payments Agency. To meet demand, resource was moved from tourism to farming.
- The forestry theme was really successful with more spend and jobs created than expected. The grants reached all parts of the supply chain.

And disappointments?

- Poor take up in culture and heritage. The model for this programme is not easy or designed for the not for profit organisations that typically applied under this theme.
- Slow start to programme due to extended purdah. Projects took many months to develop and the drop-out rate was high but we got there in the end!

Conclusion

Whilst the LDS mapped out the expectations, the actual picture was always going to be dependent on eligible applications that could pass the application process. Applicant demand determined the type of projects, albeit within the broad framework of the LDS. The quality of the projects was improved by the application process and by the contributions of the Local Action Group.



Horsch Sprinter 6ST, Coombe End Farm

Job Creation



Indirect jobs

Safeguarding jobs

Business efficiencies

Wider benefits

Account Manager. Retail Assistant. Chef. Waiter. Business Director. Distiller. Driver. Gardener. Forester. Site Manager. Yard Operative. Machine Operator. Administrator. Laboratory Technician. Designer. Education Centre Manager. Communications Officer. Herdsman. Activity Trainer. Print Manager. Cleaner. Shop & Café Manager. Agricultural Worker. Sales Assistant. Marketing Manager.

Lessons learnt

Feedback from our applicants on how to make the next scheme even better!

- **Away with the silos.** Applicants highlighted the confusing landscape of grant schemes, run by different organisations, operating over different geographies, and opening calls at different times. A single point of contact with information and access to all the grant schemes would significantly enhance the customer experience.
- **Win-win.** Projects typically delivered multiple benefits. For example, farm productivity and environmental benefits, small business support and historic building conservation. A future scheme should recognise and celebrate the multiple benefits arising from projects.
- **Local is best.** Support and guidance from a local LEADER team was really appreciated during the application process and beyond. It was especially helpful to have a team who knew the area and understood the needs of the local business community.
- **Less is more.** Most applicants experienced difficulties and frustrations with the application forms at some point. A review of the forms to eliminate duplication and ideally reduce the overall length of the form would be welcomed by applicants.
- **Money matters.** Projects had to be fully funded upfront and the grant element claimed in arrears. This funding model is better suited to organisations that can borrow commercially – something non-profit organisations typically don't do. This made the programme prohibitive for many non-profit organisations and this disproportionately affected culture and heritage and rural services initiatives.



Local Action Group at Conygree Farm

And some feedback from us

- We believe CCB is well positioned to deliver a future programme, whether this is environmental or economic, or ideally a combination of both. CCB has a good track record for delivery. CCB has successfully delivered LEADER and Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) grants; it was the lead partner for Save our Magnificent Meadows; a national HLF funded initiative to improve grasslands, it takes overall responsibility for the Cotswold Way National Trail, it has supported Natural England and its predecessors in advising and signing up landowners for Stewardship, and it manages and coordinates several hundred Cotswold Voluntary Wardens.
- CCB has the governance structures, strategic plans and fiscal rigour in place to deliver large scale programmes, including LEADER-style community-led local development models. The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 enables Defra to delegate to listed organisations – CCB is on the list.
- CCB has submitted proposals for delivering Environmental Land Management (ELM) schemes. We would like to offer applicants an enhanced version that allows them to apply for capital projects under one scheme. There are a multitude of environmental benefits arising from new technology on farms. This would complement an ELM scheme and deliver added benefits/outputs. The same is true for forestry operations and bringing neglected woodland back into active management. However, we do not want to limit the programme to landowners and believe the capital programme should be open to all rural businesses.
- Finally, thank you to all our supporters, beneficiaries, Defra and the Rural Payments Agency, and our Local Action Group members, past and present, who have been a massive credit to the programme.

Grants awarded

Farming productivity

£378,330	12 direct & min-till drills
£49,958	Robotic milking system
£43,027	Irrigation reservoir
£28,787	Four fertiliser spreaders
£26,061	Trailing shoe slurry system
£23,371	Ice-cream & butter production facility
£20,414	Cluster flush system & ruminant collars
£20,048	Cluster flush system & cow mattresses
£19,857	Two cluster flush systems
£17,435	Trailing shoe & ruminant collars
£10,305	Two mobile sheep handling systems
£6,991	Fixed cattle handling system

Micro and small businesses

£99,995	Veritas Property Management – New office space
£99,982	Cotswold Seeds – FarmED, construction of education building
£99,918	Cotswold Printing Co – Large scale printer, cutter & laminator
£58,758	Watermoor Meat Supply – Equipment and improvements to the farm shop & café
£48,849	Vegetable Matters – Construction of new farm shop & café
£47,973	Wotton Farm Shop – Expansion of the retail space
£40,000	Westend Office Suites – New high quality office units
£38,440	Elcombe Firewood – Log drying kiln and tipper delivery truck
£37,824	Jive Pony – New training barn
£30,844	Watermoor Meat Supply – Refurbishment and modernisation of butchers shop
£27,882	Conygree Farm – Set of large tipis, toilets, chiller trailer and generator
£17,819	Ocean Ecology – Specialist laboratory equipment
£13,011	Saltpig – Fit out of a business unit & equipment
£10,462	Capreolus Distillery – New still & equipment
£6,200	Elements Brewing Co Ltd – New canning line facility
£5,556	Wholly Gelato – Milk vending machine & equipment

Rural tourism

£49,993	Cerney Wick Farm Equestrian – Conversion of agricultural buildings into holiday units
£49,125	Owlpen Park Farms – Conversion of barn into high quality tourist accommodation
£29,292	Longhills Farm – Construction of two bespoke luxury wooden holiday homes
£16,075	The Farm Camp – Roundhouse and facilities block

Rural services

£39,026	Bledington Community Shop Ltd – Construction of new community shop & café
£18,508	Berkeley Castle – Renovation of education room

Forestry productivity

£49,737	Walkers Logs – Firewood processor
£48,000	Arbor Tree Care – Harvadig forestry harvester
£47,464	JAG Timber – Firewood processor, new storage space & large area of hard standing
£38,112	Bathurst Estate (Earl's Fund) – New forestry equipment & firewood processor
£10,000	Little Owl Logs – Firewood processor & log deck
£5,580	Valley Forestry – Charcoal retort



The European Agricultural Fund
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