

A word from Elizabeth Gillespie: Chair of the Local Action Group

A very successful LEADER programme ran across the southern part of rural Oxfordshire from 2008 to 2013. The Local Action Group (LAG) awarded £1.2 million in grants, brought in more than £2.5 million in private sector and other funding and supported the growth of more than sixty businesses. We want to continue the success of the previous programme and are extending its benefits to a wider area of rural Oxfordshire.

We have £1.55 million available for suitable rural projects. We want to hear from you if your project will create jobs, increase productivity, efficiency or develop new markets. Or if your project will increase visitor spend in the area or provide an essential rural service.

Grant applications must be for at least **£5,000** and the maximum will typically be **£100,000** with a discretionary range to go higher for projects that show exceptional value and need. To be considered for the higher amount projects will need to demonstrate high direct economic outputs or a strong fit with the Oxfordshire LAG local priorities.

National Priorities

Projects must fit into one of the six national priorities:

- 1) **To increase farm productivity**
- 2) **To support micro and small businesses and farm diversification**
- 3) **To boost rural tourism**
- 4) **To provide rural services**
- 5) **To provide cultural and heritage activities**
- 6) **To increase forestry productivity**

Oxfordshire LAG Local Priorities

Grow, sell and eat more local food – reconnecting farmers, growers and producers with people locally. Localising the food chain in whole or in part thereby retaining more of the added value within the local economy and reducing the carbon footprint.

Create vibrant villages – creating more economic activity and sustainable rural services and facilities in villages. Businesses and facilities based in villages not only create jobs but also bring the village to life during the working day and can provide essential social support.

Revive our rivers and canal – enabling more people to enjoy our rivers and canal, not pass by. Our rivers and canal provide an overlooked visitor attraction with great potential for great recreational use, job creation and visitor spend.

Unlock the potential of woodland – managing woodland and developing the local distribution network for wood fuel, timber and wood products. Increasing the levels of sustainable management of Oxfordshire's many privately owned woodlands can create new economic, social and environmental benefits.

Oxfordshire LAG's Objectives

Oxfordshire LAG have identified objectives under each national priority to support their local priorities:

1. To increase farm productivity

- encourage the production and marketing of good local food to support the local economy and reduce our carbon footprint
- encourage an increase in the percentage of farm income derived from the marketplace
- help to safeguard and create land based jobs

2. To support micro and small businesses and farm diversification

- encourage reuse of redundant farm buildings to support farm diversification and microenterprises
- encourage an increase in the percentage of farm income derived from the marketplace
- encourage innovative business activity in villages
- encourage businesses and community enterprises that serve the local community
- help to safeguard and create rurally based jobs

3. To boost rural tourism

- encourage businesses that promote cycling, boating and walking
- encourage businesses that promote good local food, support the local economy and reduce our carbon footprint
- encourage businesses that work with others to promote local heritage
- encourage projects that promote and enhance the River Thames and its tributaries as a visitor destination
- help to safeguard and create rurally based jobs

4. To provide rural services

- encourage facilities that serve businesses as well as residents
- encourage projects that help residents with family commitments to take up employment
- help to safeguard and create rurally based jobs

5. To provide cultural and heritage activities

- encourage activity that creates or enhances a visitor destination
- help to safeguard and create rurally based jobs

6. To increase forestry productivity

- encourage an increase in the supply and use of local wood and reduce our carbon footprint
- encourage an increase in the demand for local wood
- help to safeguard and create land based jobs

You can download the Oxfordshire LAG Local Development Strategy from our website www.oxfordshireleader.org.uk