

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Regeneration and Sustainable Development Cabinet Board

12th April 2019

Report of the Head of Participation – Chris Millis

Matter for Information

Wards Affected:

All Rural Wards of Neath Port Talbot:

1. Aberdulais
2. Blaengwrach
3. Bryn & Cwmavon
4. Brynamman (Lower)
5. Bryncoch North
6. Coedffranc West
7. Crynant
8. Cwmllynfell
9. Cymmer
10. Dyffryn
11. Glyncorrwg
12. Glynneath

13. Godrergraig
14. Gwaun Cae Gurwen
15. Gwynfi
16. Margam
17. Onllwyn
18. Pelenna
19. Pontardawe
20. Resolven
21. Rhos
22. Seven Sisters
23. Taibach
24. Ystalyfera

Rural Development Plan 2014-2020

Purpose of the Report

To update Members and to give an overview of the Rural Development Plan 2014-2020 and describe what has been achieved in Neath Port Talbot during the current Programme.

Executive Summary

The Rural Community Development team manages delivery of the Welsh Government and European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) funded LEADER scheme and Rural Community Development Scheme (RCDF), and ensures that the Authority meets duties in relation to the administration and promotion of the schemes.

The LEADER Programme began in July 2015 and is making good progress against the targets outlined in our Local Development Strategy. To date, 15 projects have been funded, and over 1200 participants from across rural Neath Port Talbot have been supported. As things stand, we have allocated over 60% of our LEADER funding.

To date, we have supported more than 30 applications to the Welsh Government-administered Rural Community Development Fund for capital grants, and of those 9 were approved.

Background

The Rural Development Plan 2014-2020 is jointly funded by the Welsh Government and the European Union via the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD). The Programme was created to support Communities, pre-commercial business development and environmental causes in rural areas. Across Wales the Programme is worth £1 billion, and of this, roughly 10% is reserved for Community Development. The Community Development interventions are separated into two key schemes. Firstly, there is a scheme for capital investment called the Rural Community Development Fund, which is administered by Welsh Government Directly. Secondly, there is a revenue investment scheme called LEADER, and this is administered on a Local level by the Authority's Rural Community Development team.

LEADER

LEADER funding can be used to fund innovative new projects that are primarily focussed in rural wards. There are five key themes that all prospective projects must fit under:

- Adding Value to Local Identity and natural and cultural resources
- Facilitating pre-commercial development and short supply chains
- Exploring new ways of providing non-statutory local services
- Renewable energy at community level

- Exploitation of digital technology

In order to be able to draw down funding, each area must set up a decision-making body called a Local Action Group (LAG). In Neath Port Talbot the LAG is called 'Regenerate NPT' and it is made up of equal numbers of Public, Private, and Third sector representatives. They meet quarterly, and it is their responsibility to assess each application for funding objectively and robustly so that only the very best projects are funded.

The administration of the LAG is carried out by the Rural Community Development team. This team is made up of 4 members of staff, all of whom are fully funded by the scheme. As well as administering the LAG, they are responsible for promoting the Programme, engaging prospective applicants, supporting projects which are up and running, carrying out research studies identified by the LAG, monitoring projects and reporting on their outcomes, and dealing with claims both from applicants, and to Welsh Government.

Funding

In May 2015, following the submission of the Local Development Strategy, the Local Authority were successful in applying for £2,156,000 of LEADER funding. The new Programme officially started on 1st July 2015 and will run until 31st December 2020.

LEADER projects are funded on an 80/20 basis whereby applicants must have secured at least 20% of the total project cost in order to apply for up to 80%. To date, 15 projects have been approved, resulting in a total of £813,442 being allocated to projects.

Progress to date

It is a requirement to report back to Welsh Government on a number of Key Performance Indicators and projects are continually monitored by the Rural Community Development team to ensure that sufficient progress is being made. To date, 1227 participants have been supported to learn new skills, attend events, take part in volunteering opportunities and enrol for formal training opportunities. Therefore we have already achieved 80% of our total target of 1542 participants supported. As well as this, 338 stakeholders have been engaged by our projects to ensure that the work

that is being implemented through the Programme synergises with other schemes and that the benefits are widely shared.

Rural Community Development Fund

The Rural Community Development Fund (RCDF) is administered by Welsh Government, but LAGs and their administrative bodies are required to promote the scheme, offer support to new applicants, and comment on proposals from their area. RCDF grants are primarily capital, and can be used to support the following interventions in rural areas:

- Community Renewable schemes
- Broadband infrastructure
- Conversion of old buildings for community use
- Upgrading of existing community buildings/infrastructure
- Drawing up of development plans/proposals
- Maintenance/restoration of sites of cultural and natural heritage

Funding

There is roughly £57 million available through this scheme pan Wales. Welsh Government open funding windows periodically with around £3,000,000 available during each one. Since the start of the Programme there have been 6 funding windows.

Progress to date

The Rural Community Development team have supported Community Organisations across rural NPT to submit a total of 36 applications and of those, 9 project were given formal approval and were able to draw down approximately £800k in grants. RCDF was terminated on: 31/05/2018. A new fund Enabling Natural Resources and Well-being in Wales (ENRAW) Grant went live in July 18.

Financial Impact

There are no financial impacts associated with this report.

Equality Impact Assessment

There are no equality impacts associated with this report.

Workforce Impacts

There are no workforce impacts associated with this report.

Legal Impacts

There are no legal impacts associated with this report.

Risk Management

There are no risk management issues associated with this report.

Consultation

There is no requirement under the Constitution for external consultation on this item.

Recommendations

This report is for information only. Members are asked to note the report.

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